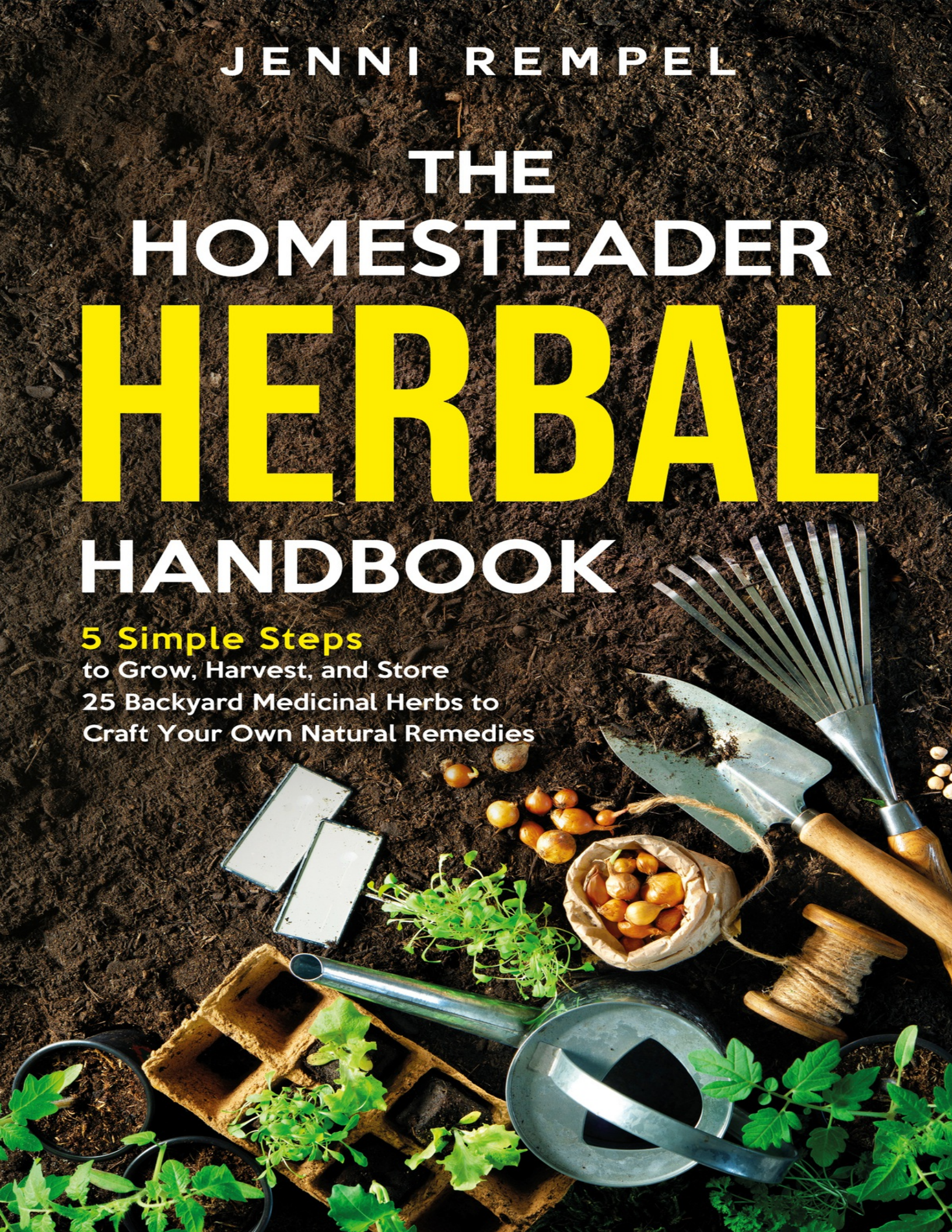
JENNI REMPEL

THE HOMESTEADER HERBAL HANDBOOK

5 Simple Steps
to Grow, Harvest, and Store
25 Backyard Medicinal Herbs to
Craft Your Own Natural Remedies



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5 SIMPLE STEPS TO GROW, HARVEST, & STORE
25 BACKYARD MEDICINAL HERBS TO CRAFT YOUR OWN
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JENNI REMPEL

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For my husband, Dave, who didn’t just tolerate me putting together this book but encouraged me to do so. You rave about our homegrown herbs & food and flatter me shamelessly about our fresh meals, even the average ones. You till the land, put in a sand point & watering system for me, and help me harvest when the time is right. In short, this is all your fault, and I love you for it.

And to my six grandbabies, Aria, Brynlee, Asher, Addison, Micah, & Emilia, who are the best garden helpers. Nana loves you forever (and maybe just a little longer).

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OTHER BOOKS BY JENNI REMPEL

FORGET THE PHARMACY - GROW YOUR OWN MEDICINE

GROW YOUR OWN HERBAL PHARMACY

THE COMPREHENSIVE HERBAL HANDBOOK (2 IN 1)

THE HERBALIST'S HEALING GARDEN FOR BEGINNERS

SPANISH

EL-MANUAL-COMPLETO-DE-HIERBAS-MEDICINALES (2 EN 1)

EL MANUAL DE HIERBAS DEL HORTELANO

OLVIDATE DE LA FARMACIA – CULTIVA TU PROPIA MEDICINA

GERMAN

VERGESSEN SIE DIE APOTHEKE – PFLANZEN SIE IHRE EIGENE MEDIZI

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INTRODUCTION

Herbal remedies are an excellent way to address our daily health and wellness needs. While there are illnesses and trauma that still require conventional medicine, the desire to return to the simplicity of living a healthy lifestyle free from toxins, additives, fake hormones, and chemicals is a movement that continues to grow. In fact, people who would never have considered being organic ten or fifteen years ago are now incorporating it into their daily lifestyles. I know this because that was me. I grew up a city girl and never thought about where my food came from. It was just at the grocery store. I never grew a plant, except for a little cactus I was given as a gift when I was 8, and it never occurred to me to do so. The same was true when it came to pharmaceuticals. Have a headache? Take an aspirin. Need ointment? Head to the drugstore. Have a medical condition? Take the pills and live with the side effects. I never questioned my choices and never considered there were alternatives. I equated pharmaceuticals with health.

Fast forward to my early 40's, I was raising three active daughters, working full time (more than full time), running my own business, and traveling constantly. Then, I got sick. Nothing serious, thankfully, or so I thought, but I couldn't seem to shake it. I got a cold. Then I got the flu. Then I got another cold. Then I got a different virus, and so on and so on. I caught everything over the next year or two, and I had no resistance to any infection. I was run down and felt tired and terrible. Trips to the doctor resulted in more antibiotics but not better health.

In desperation, I reached out to a "health nut" friend who recommended I see a naturopath. I had never given "natural medicine" much credence, but at that point, I was willing to try anything. I met with the naturopath and told her I seemed to have a faulty immune system. Instead of loading me with pharmaceuticals, she added natural things to my diet that began to restore my overall health. It worked!

Today I live on a hobby farm, and my interest in natural remedies has grown considerably, as has my ability to grow my own food and plants! Now a Nana to six toddlers, I am interested in proactively ensuring their health through herbs and healthy eating. Fortunately, my daughters also subscribe to this healthy lifestyle.

What I have learned is that anyone can do this. If you have a city backyard, you can grow a small garden plot. If you have a larger property, you can cultivate a huge garden. If you have limited space, you can have containers and hanging baskets. I call it the "homestead mindset." You can grow and cultivate natural foods and herbs that inspire and create health. When I started, I didn't know anything, and I had to learn step by step what to do. You can too!

> *"The natural force within each one of us is the greatest force in getting well. Our food should be our medicine. Our Medicine should be our food."*
>
> HIPPOCRATES

The father of modern medicine had some very wise words. There are over 60 books with the work of Hippocrates, some of the oldest writings on medicine in the world. Each describes

different illnesses and diseases, their symptoms, and how diet and exercise is the remedy for most ailments. Second to that was plant-based treatments.

Did you know it is believed that Hippocrates lived into his nineties? This is quite amazing, considering the average life expectancy in Ancient Greece was around 35 years (BBC.com, 2018).

The question is, what happened over the centuries for us to trust modern pharmaceuticals more than our ancestors' faith in plants for healing? More importantly, why is there still a division between conventional medicine and herbal medicine?

In a perfect world, we would be able to support a healthy lifestyle by being self-sufficient and saving money at the same time. And when it comes to illnesses and diseases, we would consult a doctor about the use of natural remedies in place of or in cooperation with conventional medicines. The key to this is herbs.

Homestead gardening is not about being stuck in an old way of living. It is a mental state or a lifestyle in which a person chooses to live the old-fashioned way because of the incredible benefits it brings.

First of all, there is a great sense of satisfaction growing your own food to take care of yourself and your family. The flavor and quality of food are far superior to anything that has been raised with chemicals, wrapped in plastic, and left on a store shelf. My husband raves about how the fresh food tastes in our meals. I enjoy the flattery so much; I often think about new and creative ways to create fresh meals!

There is also an immense feeling of calm and tranquility when working in your own garden. It is a time to escape from technology and the stresses of everyday life and just enjoy the moment with nature.

When you start incorporating herbs in your homestead garden, you have the equivalent of a pharmacy in your backyard, especially when you master how to extract the benefits of these green drugs.

Whether you are an avid homestead gardener and are already leading a self-sustaining lifestyle, or you have the uncanny ability to kill a cactus (like I did), you can learn how to grow different homestead herbs in five simple steps.

I used to look at people like Elle Macpherson and assume that I, too, could look like with the help of a personal trainer, plenty of money, and photoshop! She has long believed in Traditional Chinese Medicine and herbal medicine to promote and maintain wellness rather than treat an illness, much like Hippocrates. It is never too late for anyone to start.

I confess herbal medicine was not my first interest in my homestead garden. Despite growing my own food for several years, the only herbs I used were those in my recipes. However, as I researched the benefits of herbs and natural remedies, I started to expand my homestead herbs to include green drugs that would benefit my health.

Rather than thinking about herbs I wanted to spice up a meal, I began to think first about the herbs for my health and then some "patio potions" that I could create. Another benefit to my

family was exploring new recipes packed with goodness, which I will share with you—at least the ones that turned out to be delicious.

It has been 13 years since my first visit to the naturopath when my mind was opened to natural and herbal solutions, for which I am very grateful. Throughout the years, I have looked at the specific properties of individual herbs, how best to harvest and store them, and some of the best ways to use them. I have practiced with everything from teas and tinctures to salves and facemasks. I have even started making my own cleaning products and aromatherapy candles.

I researched the herbs to understand dosages and interactions with other drugs and medications. Just because herbs are plants grown in nature does not mean that they are solutions for everyone. I most certainly did not study to be a doctor, and by no means is my advice to be used as a replacement for the advice you receive from your doctor. I am just a fellow learner who has enjoyed the journey of growing plants and utilizing their goodness.

I can tell you that my homestead herbs have changed my life. An illness that in the past would have taken weeks for me to conquer is gone in a few days; I sleep better, I am happier, and most importantly, I have the energy to keep up with my six grandchildren. I have done this with natural herbal remedies and the help and sound medical advice of my doctor.

Now it is time for you to do the same. Before you rush out to gather your gardening tools, let us start with the basics. What exactly are herbs and spices, and how do they work to boost our health?

Chapter 1

THE HISTORY BEHIND HERBS

I am sure you are itching to get started on actual homestead gardening. But first, let's begin with a quick review of this fascinating practice. Notice the themes that continue throughout the centuries and across the cultures.

HOW HUMANS SURVIVED BEFORE PHARMACEUTICALS

Our ancestors didn't have reference guides to help them know which plants, herbs, and spices were beneficial. They only had trial and error and observing the effects of each concoction. Even before using herbs as medicine, people explored which foods were safe and which were not by learning their reactions. They then passed this knowledge down to future generations. When it came to medicines, they explored the use of herbs—the green leafy parts of a plant—and spices—the roots, stems, seeds, and flowers.

While this was an ideal solution to learn remedies for common illnesses and injuries, many of the more severe conditions were considered supernatural. An incurable condition that wasn't affected by the natural remedies would indicate a problem with the soul. In these cases, ancient treatment would combine herbal remedies with magic and religion. In fact, this was how the term "Witch Doctor" was coined. Even today, there are still some misconceptions about herbs.

Here is an example of the evolution of medicine. Today, some head injuries require a craniotomy, drilling a small hole into the skull to relieve pressure or a buildup of fluids. Naturally, we would not consider doing this without some form of anesthetic and antibiotics to prevent infection.

This procedure would have been called trepanation in pre-modern medicine—similar to a craniotomy, with some rather brutal tools. Trepanning was used to treat head injuries, even epilepsy, by creating a hole for "evil spirits" to escape the body. Different cultures would have used native plants for their pain-killing and antibiotic properties along with trepanation.

Medicine today has obviously come a long way, and there is no doubt that this is a great thing. However, today's art of natural healing should follow the same main principle as ancient healing; we need to treat the entire body and the soul instead of just treating symptoms.

THE USE OF HERBS THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Herbal medicine can be traced back to three established cultural practices, Western use, Ayurvedic medicine, and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). The Greeks and Romans are the principal sources of Western medicine, but carbon dating dates French cave paintings of herbal use as old as 13,500 to 25,000 B.C. We will be looking at herbs and spices from all three traditions.

Our friend Hippocrates listed four hundred herbs for their medicinal properties back in the fifth century B.C. Things were going well for our green remedies until the Middle Ages when the uses

of herbal treatments changed. During this time, herbs were used to mask the smell of people who did not wash. While herbs were used to preserve meat, they were also used to cover up the smell of rotting flesh. In an unfortunate time in history, the church took to burning herbalists because of the association of herbs with witchcraft. Today, there are still a small handful of people who still make these assumptions.

Ayurveda is an Indian holistic approach to medicine that dates back to approximately 1500 B.C. Ayurveda is Sanskrit for life (ayur) and science or knowledge (veda). The main principle is the balance between the body, mind, spirit, and environment, and it promotes a healthy lifestyle to prevent illness and disease. To create the right balance, people follow a special diet along with herbal remedies and relaxation practices like yoga and meditation. Ayurveda is similar to the medical care system we use in conventional Western medicine and is therefore considered one of the oldest medical care systems in the world.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) stems from the idea that illness is caused by an imbalance, and this imbalance is caused by a battle between our internal forces, the yin and yang. TCM treatments, such as herbs and acupuncture, are used as treatments to stimulate the body's natural ability to heal (PlanetNatural.com, N.D.).

HOW DOES HERBAL MEDICINE FOLLOW THE HOMESTEAD MENTALITY?

The homestead way of life is about using our available space to provide self-sufficiency for ourselves and our families. Many think of this as growing food for self-sustainability, but it can encompass far more, such as solar power, harvesting rainwater, and of course, refraining from the use of chemicals.

In a homestead garden, everything has a purpose, and nothing goes to waste. Kitchen scraps are turned into compost to feed the plants, and seeds are saved for use the following year. We provide food for the livestock that will provide food for us, one way or another.

Herbs are a logical addition to a homestead garden because they give us the ability to boost our health, cure and heal ourselves, and relieve the symptoms of those chronic health conditions.

Growing your own herbs adds beauty to your garden while providing peace of mind. The first sign of a sore throat, you do not need to rush to pop a pill or buy medication. You can step outside, harvest plants, and make your own natural solution. Many of these remedies will also last for weeks, if not months, and can be used for more than one condition, benefitting the entire family.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND HERBAL MEDICINE

Overall, herbs contain large amounts of nutrients that the body cannot produce. For example, we need vitamins so that our system can function the right way and nutrients to help our cells and body tissues. As we look at each herb, you will discover all of the health benefits, but for now, we will go over just one study and the science behind the herb.

In 2019, the Department of Physiology and Biophysics at the UCI School of Medicine researched the impact of ten herbs on lowering blood pressure. These ten herbs, including lavender, chamomile, thyme, oregano, and ginger, activated the KCNQ5 gene. The fancy name

for this is the Potassium Voltage-Gated Channel Subfamily Q Member 5, but that is a bit of a mouthful. Once activated, KCNQ5 relaxes muscles surrounding blood vessels, allowing the same amount of blood to flow but at a lower pressure.

What is even more impressive is that this is nothing new. People have been using these herbs for healing since the beginning of time, and science now allows us to understand better how they work.

Can Science and Nature Work Together?

There is another imbalance here. Herbs have an incredible history but lack the volume of scientific studies to prove their benefits. Pharmaceuticals are still in their infancy compared with traditional medicine. More and more studies are examining the effects of herbal medicine, and it looks incredibly promising. Of course, there are some challenges also. When scientists look at a drug, they focus on how one chemical reacts with the body. A plant has various phytochemicals and biochemicals, and it is difficult to see which of these are having an impact on each part of the body.

We need to find the right balance between essential drugs and herbs that can replace some conventional medicines. Let us say you have the flu. Many doctors will prescribe rest, fluids, and acetaminophen. Unfortunately, acetaminophen overdose is one of the leading causes of liver disease. However, a homemade tea from lavender, thyme, and milk thistle combats flu symptoms and boosts liver function.

There should not be a territory war between the herbalist and the doctor. Instead, there should be mutual respect for both systems, where people can make lifestyle changes and take advantage of essential conventional medicines while supplementing diets for all-around health.

With that in mind, let us begin our five-step learning for some of the most popular herbs and spices that you can grow.

Finally, I want to invite you to join our Facebook community at

www.facebook.com/groups/homesteadmindset/

Be part of our Homestead Mindset Community where we can learn about herbs, gardening, stocking your pantry, and asking questions about homesteading.

It doesn’t matter if you live in an apartment or have many acres. The mindset of being natural, returning to the land, being a little old-fashioned, being prepared, and providing for ourselves starts with how we think. Let’s learn together!

DOWNLOAD YOUR FREE
FULL-COLOR REFERENCE CHART
OF EVERY HERB IN THIS BOOK

It is nice to see what each herb looks like as we discuss it. In the guide, each herb has a full-color picture. You can print this handy guide as a quick reference.

To download your FREE "The Homesteader Herbal Handbook Companion List of Herbs", scan this QR code

or go to
companion.homesteadmindset.com
If you need help, email me at hello@homesteadmindset.com

Chapter 2

ALOE VERA

Aloe barbadensis

Most of us have had an aloe vera product in our bathroom cabinet at one time or another. It is probably the most common lotion for treating sunburn and is found in many moisturizers. However, there is nothing better than having the pure product available whenever you need it. Rather than paying for pricy commercial products, you can have your own plant in the house and just cut off a leaf. It is also an excellent plant for us to start with because it is incredibly easy to care for.

HOW CAN ALOE VERA HELP US

While it might have similar physical characteristics to a cactus, aloe vera is actually a short-stemmed shrub. The leaves are bright green with small spikes along the sides. Aloe vera has over 75 potentially active compounds, including vitamins, minerals, enzymes, and amino acids.

Aloe contains vitamins A, C, and E, which are antioxidants. There are eight enzymes and minerals, including calcium, magnesium, potassium, sodium, and zinc. Aloe vera also provides us with an impressive 20 out of the 22 amino acids our bodies need (Surjushe, et al., 2008).

Applying aloe vera to burns and wounds can help relieve itching, swelling, and pain, because it is a mild anesthetic. It also has antibacterial and antifungal properties, and will stimulate blood flow to the area to help with healing. Aloe can help with other skin conditions like psoriasis, eczema, and acne. Making a juice out of the gel may help with arthritis swelling, gum infections, and intestinal problems. And, believe it or not, aloe vera is also edible.

FIVE STEPS TO OWNING A HEALTHY ALOE VERA PLANT

Aloe vera is the plant that keeps on giving. It won’t be long until you have numerous plants for

your home.

Step 1: Planting Your Aloe Vera

You can plant aloe seeds in sandy soil. If you want to harvest seeds, they will have to be gathered from a pollinated plant. My favorite way to grow Aloe vera is from the pup of an adult plant. Pups are smaller sprouts that grow off the sides of the parent plant, and they can be gently removed and replanted in a new pot. If you know anyone with a plant, ask if you can have a pup.

Step 2: Nurturing Your Aloe Vera

Aloe vera can be grown indoors or outdoors. It likes a little bit of sun and partial shade. If you are growing indoors, you can put the plant next to a window but be careful that too much sunlight does not burn the leaves. They should only need watering twice a week.

Step 3: Harvesting Your Aloe Vera

With a sharp pair of scissors, cut the base of a leaf as close to the main stem as you can. Only cut two or three stems at a time so that you don't stress the plant. You can harvest throughout the year, whenever you need it, so it is a healing gift that keeps on giving. If you are going to use the leaves in food, trim off the prickly points. Cut the leaf open and scrape the gel out. Wash the gel and the leaves before you use them. Soak the gel in a bowl of water for a few minutes to ensure it is clean and free from the yellow liquid inside the leaf.

Step 4: Storing Your Aloe Vera

If you are not going to use the leaves and gel straight away, leave the leaf intact. It will keep well on the kitchen counter for a couple of days. You can wrap a little aluminum foil around the cut end of the leaf and pop it in the fridge for up to two weeks and in the freezer for up to eight months inside a freezer bag.

Step 5: Putting Your Aloe Vera to Use

This is the fun part! Commercially bought aloe vera gel is typically green. Natural aloe is clear, sometimes golden, depending on the harvest season. Oh, the irony of making something that is naturally clear look green so that it mimics nature! Cut open your leaf and apply the gel directly onto any burn or skin wound you have up to three times a day.

If you are looking for a nice homemade facemask, just apply the gel to your face once or twice a week. If you are trying to fight acne, add a little lemon juice to the gel first. After 10-15 minutes, wash your face, although, some people will even leave it on overnight. This same mixture is good for hair too. Drinking aloe vera mixed with lemon juice and water can help with lung congestion.

Make a poultice for sprains and strains by blending the leaves whole and applying the mixture to the swollen area. You can do the same to any joint that is swollen or painful from arthritis.

I found a fantastic lotion recipe on GetInspiredEveryday.com that combines another of my favorite homestead herbs. Cook ¼ cup of beeswax with ½ cup of coconut oil on the lowest heat possible. Once melted, add ½ cup of Aloe gel and a few drops of mint essential oils, then hand whisk the mixture. Leave it to cool for a couple of hours and finish it off with another whisk.

Over time, the lotion becomes thicker.

You may not often associate aloe vera with food but give it a go! Remember to remove the spikes before eating the leaves. They are pretty chewy, so some people find that soaking them in water helps. Try slicing them and adding them to stir-fries. You can also add some chunks of gel to smoothies or salads.

THINGS YOU SHOULD BEAR IN MIND WITH ALOE VERA

If you look carefully at the inside of a leaf, you will notice a yellow liquid between the skin and the gel. You need to be aware of this and remove it. It is aloe latex and may cause stomach pains and/or diarrhea. That being said, you would have to ingest about 1g of aloe latex a day to cause serious problems. This reinforces why washing both the gel and the leaves is essential before eating them.

Pregnant women, people with digestive disorders, or anyone on diabetes, heart, or lung medications should not consume aloe latex!

I love my aloe vera plants. They are bright, and the leaves are quite impressive. All the plant needs is a little sun and water, and in return, you have amazing health benefits, inside and out. True, the taste is a little bitter, but it is still interesting to try in your culinary dishes, and it makes me feel a little exotic when I cook with it!

Chapter 3

ASHWAGANDHA

Withania somnifera

Ashwagandha is one of the main remedies used in Ayurveda medicine. A little fun fact for you, “ashwa” in Sanskrit means horse, and “gandha” means smell. It is also known as Indian Ginseng or the King of Herbs. It is a small shrub that has tiny pale flowers and red berries. The roots of Ashwagandha contain natural steroids called withanolides, which could explain the Western name of Withania somnifera. It is the roots that hold the power to heal.

THE MAIN BENEFITS OF ASHWAGANDHA

In ancient times in India, Ashwagandha was considered a rejuvenator and helped boost the immune system. It may improve heart health, focus, memory, muscle power, and strength. If anyone wants a little extra spark in the bedroom, studies show that a high concentration of Ashwagandha root extract improves sexual function in women (Dongre, et al., 2015) and erectile dysfunction in men (Manidi and Thakar, 2011).

This plant stimulates the body’s production of DHEA, an antioxidant hormone that helps combat free radicals. Free radicals are molecules that contain oxygen and an uneven number of electrons. This composition makes them very easy to react with other molecules in the body and sets off a chain of chemical reactions. Free radicals can contribute to chronic health problems such as cancer.

Ashwagandha is a type of plant called an adaptogen. These types of plants are known for helping the body resist stressors of all kinds. Therefore, this herb is probably best known for helping combat stress and anxiety and the secondary effects of those conditions, like insomnia.

FROM GROWING TO USING ASHWAGANDHA IN FIVE STEPS

Ashwagandha is native to Asia and Africa, so you can imagine the plant requires warmer

climates. Typically, it is grown in US hardiness zones 8 to 12. If you are not in these zones, it does not mean you cannot raise it, but you may need to bring the plant indoors at night or grow it in a greenhouse.

Step 1: Can You Plant Ashwagandha Seeds?

Start with soil that is dry and sandy. The seeds will thrive with a pH of 7.5 to 8. Sow the seeds just under the surface of the dirt. Early spring is a good time, if sowing outdoors, once the threat of frost has gone. You can also begin seeds indoors and transplant the seedlings. Seeds take around two to four weeks to germinate.

Step 2: The Needs of Ashwagandha

Aside from the sun, Ashwagandha does not need a great deal of care, and it won't need a lot of watering. If you start to see cracks in the soil, this is a good sign that it is time for water. Bear in mind that Ashwagandha likes temperatures of between 75 and 85ºF. Anything over 80ºF and you may need to water your plant every week.

Step 3: How to Harvest Ashwagandha

This depends on whether you want to grow the plant as a perennial or an annual. As a homesteader, if there is a way to develop a plant as a perennial, I go down that route every time. I like planning for the long term, and it only takes around six months for Ashwagandha to be ready for harvest.

If you treat it as an annual, dig up the whole plant. As a perennial, gently dig some of the soil away so you can access the roots. They look like small white carrots. Harvest what you need and replace the soil. The plant will propagate, and the following year, you will have more roots to harvest.

Step 4: The Best way to Store Ashwagandha

Although the roots have the most healing benefits, we do not want to waste any part of the plant. Pick the leaves, dry them completely and crush them. Store them in an airtight container.

The roots need to be washed and dried thoroughly and then rinsed and dried again. It takes about 15 days to dry the roots, but you can also use a dehydrator or the oven on the lowest setting. Once they are dry, grind them into a powder and store it in an airtight container.

Step 5: What to do With Your Harvested Ashwagandha

Try using fresh or dried leaves to make tea. Use three or four fresh leaves or a teaspoon of dried, crushed leaves. If you can handle bitterness, try eating the berries. Because the flavor is bitter, you may need a bit of honey to balance the flavors.

For the same reason, Ashwagandha powder is best when used with sweet dishes. Try adding some to chocolate mousse, muffins, and treats like almond and fudge bits. The next smoothie you make, add a little Ashwagandha powder too. You can also add it to your favorite hot drink.

Ashwagandha powder can be mixed with water to make a paste. Apply the paste to joints to help with pain, as a face mask for youthful skin, and because ashwagandha can help your hair grow, you can apply the paste to your scalp.

POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS AND THE CORRECT ASHWAGANDHA DOSAGE

A standard dose of Ashwagandha powder is 1000mg per day. It is important to note that Ashwagandha is for short-term use only, so only 12 weeks at a time (WebMD, N.D.). You risk stomach problems like diarrhea and vomiting if you take too much.

You should avoid Ashwagandha, or at the very least, consult your doctor if you are pregnant or breastfeeding, you have an auto-immune disease, rheumatoid arthritis, or thyroid disorders. If you are having surgery in the next two weeks, you shouldn't take any form of Ashwagandha in case it interacts with the anesthetic.

If you are worried about keeping your Ashwagandha plant alive during the winter, you can harvest the seeds from the berries when they turn brown. Peel off the brown skin and crush the berry to find the seeds. If you wash them and store them in a dry place, they will be ready to sow the following spring. This is a good homestead practice because you are being self-sufficient.

Chapter 4

CALENDULA

Calendula officinalis

Calendula is in the marigold family. Marigolds certainly do not get the credit they deserve, especially not this particular variety of marigold. Marigolds are known as the “herb of the sun,” and even the flower’s scent is said to improve your mood. What’s more, marigolds are excellent at attracting pollinators, which will help your garden replant itself. Calendula will do all of this and provide you with important supplies for the medicine cabinet.

MODERN DAY FLOWER POWER

You can tell the difference between a marigold and a calendula flower by the shape of the petals. Marigolds have groups of round, wavy leaves, whereas calendula has long oblong petals. The flowers are usually bright orange or yellow. The FDA has approved the use of calendula in cosmetics, but the benefits are far more versatile.

Calendula has some incredible healing powers. Because of the anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, you can use calendula for cuts, bruises, and insect bites. Healing is faster as it protects against infections.

The antioxidants are also responsible for increasing the blood flow to skin cells. Whether ingested or applied to the skin, you may find a youthful glow to your skin with fewer signs of wrinkles and scars. Furthermore, the antioxidant beta-carotene (found in calendula) is good for eye health.

As an anti-inflammatory, calendula can reduce the symptoms of coughs, congestion, upset stomachs, and joint pain from arthritis.

Because of its antibacterial properties, calendula is often used in toothpaste and mouthwashes, so

making a homemade mouthwash could help with anything from cavities to gingivitis.

There have also been some promising results on the use of calendula with cancer patients. Extracts of calendula and isolated compounds can help with the treatment and palliative care, particularly with the side effects of radiation (Cruceriu, et al., 2018).

HOW TO GROW THIS MEMBER OF THE MARIGOLD FAMILY

Depending on your hardiness zone, you can grow calendula as a perennial or an annual in colder climates. Still, the seeds are simple to harvest, so with a bit of care, you have an antibiotic, anti-inflammatory, and antioxidant for years to come.

Step 1: It all Starts With a Seed

If you know anyone with a calendula plant, ask if they would consider sharing their seeds. A true homesteader or serious gardener typically ascribes to the gardening motto of "sharing is caring." Calendula grows well from seed, particularly if you have sourced the seeds from your local area.

Sow the seeds directly into the ground after the last frost or 4 to 6 weeks before the last frost if you want to start them indoors—Calendula seeds like well-drained soil with a 6.0 to 7.0pH. Pop the seeds ½ inch into the soil, at least ten inches apart.

Step 2: Taking Care of Your Flower Power

As soon as that last frost has passed, you can transplant your seedlings into the garden. As you can imagine from the name Herb of the Sun, calendulas like 6 to 8 hours of sunlight per day. As the young plants grow, they will need daily watering unless there is a lot of rain. When mature, you can reduce the amount of water, depending on how much rain you get. If you deadhead some of the flowers, you will see better growth. I would leave some to mature so you can collect seeds.

Step 3: Knowing the Best Time to Harvest Calendula

You can harvest the leaves as and when you need them. They are quite bitter but pair well with leafy salads. The main benefits are in the flowerheads. You want to harvest the heads when they are fresh, so before any signs of drying. Cut the flower under the head where it meets the stem. The best time of day is mid-morning. The dew will have dried, and the new blooms have opened by then. After harvesting the flowers you want, cut back the stems at a downward angle to prevent rot.

Leave some of the flower heads to dry out on the plant. You will notice they will transform into green bulges, and this is where you will find the seeds. As soon as the seed pod is dry, store the seeds in a cool place, and they will be ready for you to plant next year.

Step 4: Drying and Storing Calendula Heads

Smaller flowerheads will only take a couple of days to dry, but you should wait a few more days for larger blooms. If the heads are not completely dry, they will start to mold when stored. You can use a dehydrator too. You can pick the petals off and dry them separately to speed up the drying process. The main body of the flower has the most benefits, but we do not want any waste, so keep the petals too.

Step 5: Getting Creative with Calendula

Calendula tea is very popular. You only need 1 to 3 tablespoons of dried petals or 3 or 4 whole flowerheads. Steep in hot water for around 10 minutes. Fresh flowers are great in salads and soups, or try adding a few dried flower heads to your soups.

To make calendula oil, you should start with dried flowers. The moisture in fresh flowers may interact with the oil and turn it stale. Fill a mason jar with flowerheads and top it up with almond oil or sunflower oil. Leave the mixture for a minimum of 3 weeks. Strain the flowerheads using a cheesecloth, and you will have calendula oil for at least a year, longer if you store it in the fridge.

Calendula oil can be used as a salad dressing or apply it directly to wounds. For a spa day at home, use the oil as a hair moisturizer, a face wash, a makeup remover, or mixed with beeswax to create a salve.

CAN YOU OVERDOSE ON CALENDULA?

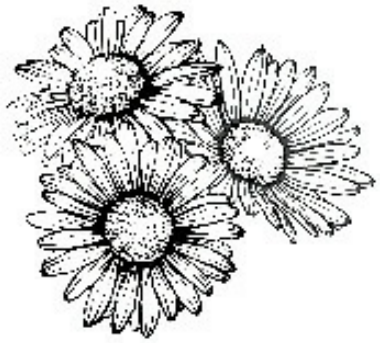
So far, there have been no studies on the advised dosage of calendula. The main thing you should watch out for is an allergic reaction. If you apply it to the skin, do a test patch first. Again, because of the lack of evidence on side effects, double-check with your doctor if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Calendula isn’t just beneficial for the homesteader. For us, this flower makes a vibrant addition to the garden, and do not forget that while the focus is to be self-sustainable, you still want to enjoy the view. Then there are the health benefits and the fact that we can provide food for essential insects like bees, birds, and butterflies.

Chapter 5

CHAMOMILE

Matricaria chamomilla



Consider this: the average cost of a box of chamomile tea is around three dollars for twenty bags – Not even a cup a day for a month. For about the same price, you can buy a pack of seeds and a lifetime of tea. What's more, while chamomile tea is the most common use of the chamomile plant, there is so more we can do with it.

There are two main types of chamomile, and both are a member of the daisy family. Roman, or English, chamomile is considered to be the true chamomile. Roman chamomile is a low-growing bush. The stems are hairy, and there is just one yellow and white flower on each stem. German chamomile grows taller; the flowers are also yellow and white, but there is more fern-like foliage on the top of the stems. Roman chamomile is a perennial plant, and German chamomile is an annual. Both have chamazulene, the essential oil that contains health benefits, but German chamomile has more.

MORE THAN JUST A RELAXING TEA

Chamomile has a complex makeup, with chamazulene and various flavonoids. Scientists have not fully worked out exactly how the chemicals interact with different parts of our body, but they have confirmed their health benefits.

For example, in 2010, research showed how chamomile tea reduced menstrual cramps and anxiety related to period pain (Jenabi and Ebrahimzadeh, 2010). Studies also showed that Chamomile tea provided limited benefits when targeting certain tumors; however, marigold tea had a more potent effect (Matic, et al., 2012).

Chamomile may also help slow or even prevent osteoporosis because of the anti-estrogenic effects. It may help reduce inflammation, treat autoimmune disorders, and reduce depression. If you have mild skin conditions, chamomile ointments will provide some relief but not as much as hydrocortisone cream.

WHICH CHAMOMILE IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

In many ways, growing chamomile is like growing calendula, but I will not make you go back to the previous chapter. Just remember to check which chamomile variety of seeds you have, and if they are German, harvest the seeds for the following year.

Step 1: Can Anyone Grow Chamomile?

Chamomile is easy to grow. Just think how common daisies pop up practically everywhere in the world. If spring has not arrived yet, start the seeds indoors, and plant the seedlings after the last frost. In spring, you can plant the seeds directly outdoors and pop the seeds just under the soil surface. Choose a location with full sun, but if you live in drier climates, it is helpful to offer them some shade.

Step 2: Caring for Chamomile

It is the growing stage when watering is most important. You want to try and give seedlings about an inch of water per week, increasing this in the dry season. Chamomile flowers from June to October, and if you deadhead some of the flowers, you will get fuller blossoms. Do not deadhead them all if you are working with German chamomile because you want some heads for your seeds. If yours is Roman chamomile, wait until after winter so the plant has a chance to self-seed. Then, prune the plant back so that it bounces back in spring.

Step 3: Harvesting Chamomile Blossoms

Harvest flower heads when the flowers are fresh and have not begun to dry. You will notice the petals starting to droop. Like calendulas, it is best to harvest the flowers in mid-morning, when the flowers are open and the dew has dried.

For Roman chamomile, first cut the flower heads close to the stem; then, cut the whole plant back in winter to see it thrive in spring. For German chamomile, once those flower heads have dried out, you can collect a few to store the seeds in a cool place for next year. You can dig up the plant and add it to your compost or cut it down to soil level and leave the roots to decompose, adding nutrients to the soil.

Step 4: Storing Chamomile

It is straightforward to dry chamomile flowers by air-drying them away from direct light. As soon as they are completely dried, store the heads in an airtight container. If you prefer, you can crush the dried heads before storing them.

Step 5: What Else Can I Make Apart From Tea?

If you are looking for a lovely relaxing tea to help you sleep, steep a tablespoon of flowers in hot water for about 10 minutes. Fresh chamomile flowers really are fantastic for salads; if you want to use fresh leaves, you can add them to salads too, but they are quite bitter.

Aside from tea, I love chamomile oil. My favorite oils to use are either sunflower oil or almond oil. Both can be infused and used in cooking or topically. Take a mason jar, fill it with flowers and add enough oil to cover the flowers. Screw on the lid and leave it in a sunny window. Give the jar a gentle shake each day, and within a month, you can strain the flowers. Chamomile oil is

excellent for cooking, especially with fish dishes, and added to mayonnaise. You can also use it for skin conditions and as a massage oil.

While chamomile tea is mild, chamomile tincture is more concentrated. Take between ½ cup to 1 cup of dried flowers and 4 to 5 cups of vodka. Keep it all in a sterile mason jar. Shake it once a week, and after 4 to 6 weeks, your tincture will be ready. You can take a teaspoon each night before bed as a sleep aid.

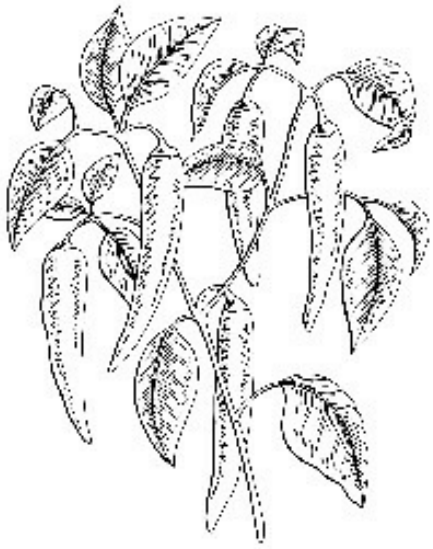
ARE THERE ANY CONCERNS ABOUT CHAMOMILE?

There are no side effects with chamomile except for possible allergic reactions. There is little research on its effects on pregnancy and breastfeeding, so check with your doctor. It is tough to overdose on chamomile, but large doses could cause drowsiness. It is often tempting to take a more potent dose because the more chamomile, the more health benefits. However, start off small, check for reactions, and then slowly increase your usage.

Chapter 6

CHILI PEPPER

Capsicum annum



You do not have to be a lover of spice to take advantage of the vitamins and minerals in chilies. Peppers are listed by heat using the Scoville scale. Bell peppers have a score of zero, just to give you a reference. Jalapeño peppers are some of the most popular, and their Scoville level is from 2,400 to 8,000. Bird's Eye chilies have a heat of 50,000 to 100,000; these are the small red chilies we are used to seeing in Thai food and many others. If you are up for the challenge, the Ghost pepper can be as hot as 855,000 to 1,041,427! Once, my husband ate an entire Ghost pepper that I had just harvested from the garden and told me after he thought *he was seeing ghosts*!

A HOT DELIVERY OF VITAMINS AND MINERALS

Two of the main vitamins in chili peppers are vitamin C and B6. However, they also contain a lot of copper, something that we lack in the average Western diet. Chilies contain capsaicin, which is thought to help increase blood flow and dilate the blood vessels. This reaction can help lower cholesterol and improve digestion. Scientists are working on the proper dosage of capsaicin to treat joint pain. As you can imagine, when used topically, there is a slight burning sensation as the cream desensitizes the sensory receptors and can help numb pain.

WHAT IT TAKES TO GROW CHILI PEPPERS

Chilis are relatively easy to grow, although not as easy as the bell pepper. The plants grow best in US hardiness zones eight and above, but that is not to say, with a bit of extra care, they won't grow in other zones.

Step 1: How to Grow Chili Peppers

Chili seeds definitely do not like frost, so if planting outdoors, make sure the last frost has passed and temperatures are over 50ºF. To get a head start, begin the seeds indoors. If outside, make sure the seeds are in direct sunlight and indoors, next to a sunny window. Plant the seeds about ¼ inch into the soil. When ready to transplant seeds, make sure it is warm enough outdoors and plant them between 18 and 36 inches apart.

Step 2: Caring for Chili Pepper for the Right Spice

Chilies like a lot of water, especially during the fruit growing stage. The soil should be kept moist but make sure it is not soaking because you risk root rot. Watering every three days is a good rule of thumb, but that will very much depend on your climate. Chilies are slow starters, but be prepared to increase the watering once the plants start to mature. This takes between 60 and 250 days. The longer you leave the chilies, the hotter they will be.

Again, when the fruit grows, you might want to add some compost to the soil. When the plant is approximately one foot tall, you should pinch the shoot tips (or cut them with a pair of scissors). This will encourage more branches to grow and establish more fruit.

Step 3: How to Pick a Peck of Your Peppers

Depending on the variety, you want to start checking your chilies at around day 75. When they begin to change color, it means they are close to ripe. You can let the soil dry out a little and pick the ripe chilies. Most healthy chili plants will live for a few years. At the end of the season, prune the plant back to the main branches. Do not forget to wash, dry, and store some seeds to plant in the future.

Step 4: Chilies will Stay Fresh in the Fridge for About a Week

If you pop them in the freezer, chilies will easily last for 10 to 12 months. Pickled chilies can remain in an airtight jar in the fridge for 1 to 2 months, but they need to be eaten within three weeks once opened. Pickling is a good storage method because it maintains the vitamins in chilies. Of course, you can dry the chilies and grind them into your own chili powder too.

Step 5: Using up Your Chili Peppers

Remember, when you are cutting chilies, do not rub your eyes!! It is enough to put you off touching a chili for a while. Chilies can be eaten raw or cooked in a wide range of meals, side dishes, and sauces. They are also an ideal addition to marinades for meats.

I love having a bottle of chili oil in the kitchen to add to sauces and marinades or even just to cook with. Take six chilies and make sure they are completely dried. Heat 1 ½ cups of vegetable oil and add the chilies. Turn the temperature down so that the oil can simmer for 10 minutes. Strain the oil and store it in an airtight container.

When your chili oil is ready, you can also use it to make a salve. Combine the oil with beeswax at an 8:1 ratio. If you try this salve to reduce joint pain and if it does not seem potent enough, you can add a tablespoon or two of cayenne powder.

IS THERE A LIMIT TO HOW MUCH HEAT YOU SHOULD TAKE?

It is safe as long as you are eating an average amount of chili peppers. If you notice your

stomach is a little upset, try reducing the dose. Because of the heat, you should always start with less and add more.

Large amounts of chili pepper may increase blood pressure, which people with high blood pressure should be aware of. If you are scheduled for surgery within two weeks, stop taking chili. Do not use this on broken skin if you have made a salve.

Just because chili peppers are traditionally associated with heat, you do not have to blow your head off with a spicy meal. Choose a chili pepper that is low on the Scoville scale before growing the hotter kinds. You can also add yogurt, cream, and cheese to balance out the heat in certain meals. Chilies should be a pleasure to grow and consume.

Chapter 7

ECHINACEA

Echinacea purpurea

Echinacea has been used as an herbal remedy by Native Americans for centuries. It was first prepared and introduced to the market around 1880, and at the beginning of the 20th century, it was the most popular plant in the US (Hostettmann, 2003). People all over the world buy it as an over-the-counter supplement, but growing this plant at home is much more fun.

HOW A MEMBER OF THE DAISY FAMILY CAN BOOST YOUR HEALTH

Echinacea, also known as the purple coneflower, is high in antioxidants, particularly the blooms. We need these antioxidants to help fight oxidative stress that has been linked to chronic diseases. It can also help lower blood sugar levels and excess inflammation. Creams with echinacea extract may help with skin conditions like eczema. There is also a chance that the extracts can suppress the growth of cancer cells.

However, its popularity is often due to echinacea's benefits to the immune system; it helps prevent and fight infections and viruses. Some studies have shown that echinacea may reduce the time someone is ill with a cold or the flu. A meta-analysis of 14 studies showed that echinacea reduced the chance of getting a cold by 58% and the duration of a cold by 1.4 days (Shah, et al., 2007).

5 STEPS TO ADD COLOR TO YOUR HOMESTEAD GARDEN

The purple coneflower is a perennial plant. Leaves grow on opposite sides of the stems, and there is one flower at the end of each stem. They have long petals, often pinkish purple in color, and a large head in the center.

Step 1: A Splash of Purple in Your Garden

Surprisingly, this is a plant that prefers to start in poor soil. If you start the seeds in rich soil, you will encourage a lot of leaves to grow but not so many flowers. To grow from the seeds, you should plant them in the fall because they will germinate better with cold stratification. You can also plant from a cutting if you know someone with purple coneflowers. In either case, make sure they are in a place that receives full sun. Seeds germinate in 10 to 14 days. Plant them about 12 inches apart.

Step 2: What do Purple Coneflowers Need to Thrive

During the early growth, make sure to water the plants daily, at least until they are well established. If you have planted seeds directly in the soil during the fall, rainwater might be enough, so check that the soil does not dry out. Aside from this, purple coneflowers are low maintenance, and they will handle drought and even thrive in summer. If the flowers look small or weak, you can add some compost. Prune the plant if you want to shape it, but you should cut it back in spring for a bushier plant.

Step 3: When to Pick Purple Coneflowers

It is best to leave your echinacea plant alone for the first year while it matures. Beginning the second year, you can start harvesting the flowers and leaves. Flowers bloom mid to late summer. You can cut the stems above the lowest pair of leaves during this time. Cut the flower head and leaves off and add the stems to your compost heap.

The roots have the most medicinal benefits but should not be harvested until the second or, even better, the third year. You will need to carefully dig around the plant to dig up the whole root ball. Next, either harvest the roots that you want to use and replant the remaining root ball or harvest all the roots. Echinacea self-seeds, so you won't need to worry about running out of this herb. You can also harvest the seeds from spikes on the flower head.

Step 4: Fresh or Dry-Storing Echinacea

After stripping the leaves and flowers, place them in a dry room with good airflow and no intense light or heat. They take about a week to completely dry, and then they can be stored in an airtight container. The roots take a little longer. Wash them first and dry them for around two weeks. Flowers, leaves, and roots can be used fresh or dry. You can use some parts fresh and then dry the rest, so nothing is wasted.

Step 5: What Cannot Be Done with Echinacea?

Fresh or dry roots, leaves, and flowers can be steeped in hot water to make tea. With your dried echinacea, you can grind it into powder. Add the powder to hot drinks, smoothies, and juices. You can even add it to pasta dishes and your vegetables.

An echinacea tincture is an excellent way to improve the immune system and can be taken as soon as those first symptoms of a cold or flu appear. Fresh roots are best for tinctures—mix 1-part roots with 2 parts alcohol. Shake the jar every once in a while, and after a month, the tincture will be ready. You can leave it for up to 3 months before you strain it. You can take one teaspoon every few hours if you are fighting a virus. If you are using the tincture proactively to

prevent an illness, one teaspoon once or twice a week should be enough.

For an echinacea salve, start by making an oil with the dried petals of five flower heads and some leaves. Crush them up and add ½ cup of oil—sunflower oil is a good choice. Leave this for 4 to 6 weeks, so there is time for infusion and then strain the oil. Fill a clean jar with the oil, then put it in a saucepan with water to make a double boiler. Add 0.5oz of beeswax, mix as the wax melts, and voila, you have your salve.

MAKING SURE YOU USE ECHINACEA THE SAFE WAY

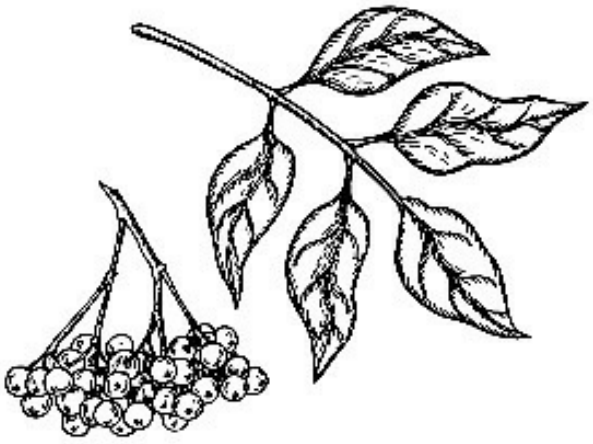
If you are taking an echinacea tincture, the most effective dose is a maximum of 10ml per day or 300 to 500 mg as a dried powder three times a day. This dosage is only for when you have symptoms. You should not take echinacea if you have an autoimmune disorder, HIV, AIDS, or tuberculosis. Children under twelve should be careful, not because of side effects but more for allergic reactions.

You might think it is easier to pop down to your local pharmacy and pick up echinacea supplements. However, not only will you will spend more this way, but you also cannot be sure what is in the supplement. I was shocked to discover that 10% of prepared echinacea products did not have any measurable amounts of echinacea (Gilroy, et al., 2003). There is no risk of this when growing and using your own purple coneflower.

Chapter 8

ELDERBERRY

Sambucus nigra



There are several berries that are easily mistaken for elderberries; many of them are poisonous. The first stage of using elderberry for its medicinal benefits is correctly identifying the plant, especially if you are foraging for the berries. Elderberry plants have woody stems, producing pairs of oblong leaves with serrated edges. On top of the stems, there are clusters of dark fruit. The leaves will help you correctly identify the plant, but luckily, you won't have this problem if you are growing elderberries in your homestead garden.

HERBAL USES OF ELDERBERRY

Elderberries have 52.2mg of vitamin C per cup (WebMD, 2020). Aside from the vitamins, the berries and flowers contain antioxidants that will help to boost the immune system, so it is another excellent plant for colds and the flu. They might also help with heart health and reduce inflammation. Elderberry's other uses include treating headaches, fever, epilepsy, kidney problems, respiratory infections, stress, HIV, and AIDS.

FROM STRATIFICATION TO ELDERBERRY JAMS

If you buy seeds from a trusted resource, you will be able to sow the seeds like any other plant. If you have harvested seeds from an elderberry plant, you must start with a process that mimics the cold weather in nature.

Step 1: What is Cold Stratification?

Start with plump, fresh berries in late summer before the birds start to feast on them. Take a few bunches of berries and put them in a bucket. Mash them with a potato masher, cover them with water, and stir occasionally. After 24 hours, good seeds will have sunk to the bottom of the bucket. Skim off the top layer of pulp and carefully pour the water through a sieve to catch the

viable seeds. Wrap the seeds in a damp paper towel and then place them in a plastic bag. Leave the bag in the fridge for 60 to 90 days. Without this cold period, seeds can take 2 to 5 years to sprout, which would require a lot of patience!

After cold stratification, you can plant the seeds about ¼ inch into the soil and add just under an inch of mulch (sawdust or bark works well). Keep the seeds in a sunny area and the topsoil moist. Germination occurs within 4 to 6 weeks, but it could take as long as a few months, so do not worry if there are no sprouts early on. For years of self-sustainability, plant several bushes to encourage cross-pollination.

Step 2: Care and Patience With Your Elderberry Bush

Even after germination, you will need a little more patience. Elderberry bushes take a couple of years to mature fully. During this time, all you need to do is water the plants once or twice a week. You can keep the area around the base of the plant weeded but do so gently so that you do not disrupt the roots of the elderberry. In the third year, prune the plant in early spring for more fruit production.

Step 3: Harvest Elderberries Before the Birds do

There is a sweet spot for harvesting elderberries. Green berries will start to turn red and then dark purple. This takes from 5 to 15 days, generally between mid-August and mid-September. Once the berries are plump and black in color, they are ready to harvest. Cut entire clusters from the bush and then strip the berries off the stem. Do not forget to harvest the elderflowers too because they have the same health benefits.

Step 4: Do not let Your Elderberries go to Waste

Freshly picked elderberries should go straight into the fridge, where they will last for a couple of days. If you freeze them, they can last for up to 10 months—longer if you vacuum seal them first. You can dry elderberries in a dehydrator or oven for about 12 hours or in the sun for 4 to 5 days. The flowers will take approximately one week to dry completely. Once dry, keep the flowers and the berries in airtight containers.

Step 5: What can You Make With Elderberry

The berries are perfect for jams, tarts, and even making your own wine. The berries do have a nasty habit of staining fabric. Unless you are purposely attempting to dye materials, be careful with your clothes. The flowers are commonly used for teas. You can use both the flowers and berries to make tinctures, salves, syrups, and vinegar or oil.

Fill a jar with berries or flowers and top the jar up with alcohol. Leave the jar in a cool place for 3 to 4 weeks, but remember to shake it each day. Use the same process with apple-cider vinegar to make vinegar for salads and cooking. Instead of vinegar, you can also use your favorite cooking oil to extract the medicinal properties and, again, use it for dressings or cooking. Melt beeswax into the oil for a salve. Elderberry salve is effective when rubbed onto aching joints or muscles.

For a syrup, use either the berries, the flowers, or a combination. Cover them with water in a saucepan and let them simmer. Smash the berries and flowers with a fork. Some people like to

add ginger or cinnamon while the mixture is simmering. When the liquid starts to reduce and thicken, strain it and add some honey if you want. This syrup will last for around one month in the fridge.

STEER CLEAR OF RAW BERRIES

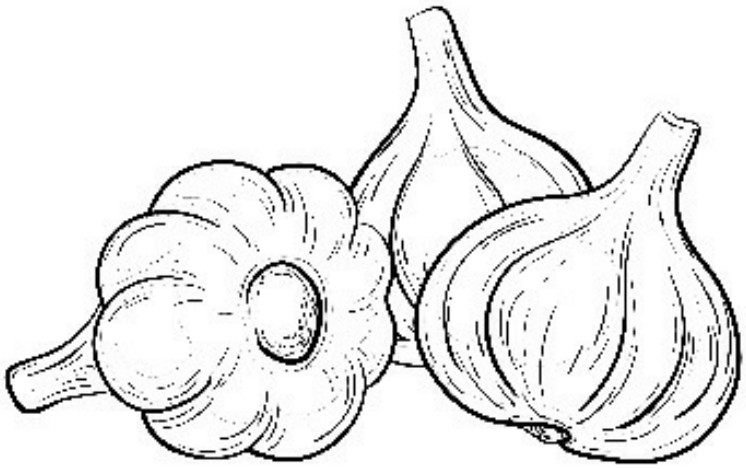
Do not consume the elderberry plant's leaves, roots, and stems. Like the raw berries, they contain lectin and cyanide, which can cause nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. The trick is to either strain the juice from the berries or cook them first. Do not take elderberries or use the flowers if you are pregnant, breastfeeding, or have problems with your immune system without consulting a doctor beforehand.

After a few years, elderberry bushes can produce pounds of berries and flowers. If you cannot use them all, that is ok. Keep what you need in the freezer for year-round use but leave some of the flowers and berries for birds and other insects. This will go a long way to pollinating your garden.

Chapter 9

GARLIC

Allium sativum



Naturally, our primary goal as homesteaders is to ensure we have ample food to feed ourselves and our families. Another vital part of this philosophy is to reduce the amount of waste as much as possible. In stores, it is common to buy garlic bulbs. However, this leaves a massive amount of the plant unused and wasted. Not many people know that garlic leaves and flowers are valuable ingredients also. Considering how versatile garlic is, it makes sense to use as much of this plant as possible.

THE GARLICKY BREATH IS WORTH IT

Garlic has so many health benefits that it is almost too good to be true. Allicin in garlic makes it a cardiac tonic, an anticarcinogenic (helps fight cancer cells), and it has antimicrobial properties. Garlic boosts liver function and supports the digestive system. It may encourage sweating, lower a fever, and remove excess mucus. Garlic has been used to treat depression and is important for women's health.

So that you are not just taking my word for it, research from the Jiangsu Provincial Center for Disease Control and Prevention in China showed that people who ate raw garlic twice a week for seven years were 44% less likely to develop lung cancer (Jin, et al., 2013). Another investigation demonstrated how compounds in garlic were 100 times more effective on intestinal illnesses than two popular antibiotics (Washington State University, 2012). These are just two of the numerous studies on garlic.

HOW TO GET A LARGE GARLIC YIELD

Another amazing thing about garlic is that you can grow it as an annual or a perennial. Either harvest all the plants you planted or leave some in the ground. Each clove will multiply and produce a new bulb!

Step 1: How to Plant Garlic

Before planting any cloves, understand if your garlic is hardneck or softneck. Hardneck garlic has a stalk that passes through the middle of the bulb. The papery outer layer of a softneck is white, compared to the darker streaks of purple with the hardneck. This is an important distinction because hardnecks are better in the colder zones, whereas softnecks need warmer weather.

Because garlic needs a cold period, you should plant cloves in late fall or early winter. Break open a bulb and take the largest cloves, leaving the papery skin on the clove. Loosen up the soil, remove weeds, and mix in some compost. Make small holes in the soil, around three inches deep and 6 inches apart. Place the cloves in the hole with the pointy end facing up.

Step 2: Taking Care of Garlic Plants

Once you have planted the cloves, water and add a good layer of mulch 1 to 2 inches thick. This will help suppress weeds and retain moisture in the soil. Garlic will go dormant during the colder months. When you start seeing flower stalks, cut them back. This way, the plant's energy will grow the bulb and not the flower.

Step 3: The Trick to Harvesting Garlic

Choosing the best time to harvest garlic will help with a longer storage time. Depending on the climate and the exact time the cloves were planted, they should take approximately nine months to mature. The upper part of the plant will start to turn brown. Dig up just one bulb to make sure the bulb is full and the skin is tight. If the bulb is ready, you can stop watering and, once dry, harvest the bulbs you want.

Step 4: Curing Garlic

Garlic needs to be cured in order to maintain its flavor and store for longer. To cure garlic, brush off the soil but do not wash them. You can gather a few bulbs together, with the stalks and leaves intact, and braid them together. The leaves will help to continue to provide the bulb energy while drying. Hang the braided bulbs in a shaded area because direct sunlight could change the flavor. They will need 3 to 6 weeks to cure. The garlic is cured when the roots are brittle and the leaves are brown. This garlic will now last long into winter!

Step 5: The Best Uses of Garlic

You do not necessarily need to cure garlic. Take some of the bulbs and use them fresh from your garden, at least while the other bulbs are curing. The best way to get the medicinal properties of garlic is in your food. It is hard to imagine meat, fish, or vegetable dishes that would not be enhanced with garlic cloves. You can crush or chop garlic for the most benefits.

Peeled cloves can be added to oil and left for a week to make garlic oil. You can also heat cloves in oil until the oil is bubbling, then turn the heat down to a gentle simmer for 20 minutes. Garlic oil does not have as many health benefits, but it is still tasty and will increase your intake.

If you have planted hardneck garlic, cut the stalks and use them in pestos and purees or cook it like a green bean. Many people say that the stalks are much milder than garlic cloves.

HOW MUCH GARLIC IS TOO MUCH?

Garlic is generally safe for everyone when eating an average amount— one or two cloves a day. Eating large amounts of garlic could give you an upset stomach. If you have stomach ulcers, problems with digestion, or blood cutting disorders, check with your doctor first. Again, large doses of garlic can thin the blood and may interact with medications that thin the blood.

In terms of safety, garlic is pretty much for everyone. However, not everyone is keen on the flavor. If you are desperate to start getting the health advantages of garlic, but the taste is putting you off, there are cooking techniques that can tone down the pungent flavor—for example, onions pair well with garlic. Salt, aromatic herbs, and sweeteners like honey can also help. Garlic won’t be so strong if you simmer dishes on a low heat.

Chapter 10

GINGER

Zingiber officinale

Many people have a love-hate relationship with ginger. The combination of spicy and sweet and the pungent smell do not appeal to everyone's palette. This is due to the main active ingredient, gingerols. Then again, others may enjoy a refreshing ginger ale, and some might love a dish not even being able to put their finger on the spice. Ginger is another herbal medicine that has been used since ancient times, and like garlic, it is a root packed with goodness.

THE ROOTS OF HERBAL MEDICINE

Studies on ginger have been small and sometimes not the most reliable quality, but even still, the results tend to back the benefits that people have experienced for hundreds of years. Phytochemical properties in ginger could work as an anti-inflammatory. There has been some evidence pointing to ginger being beneficial for heart health and the treatment of cardiovascular disease. Although ginger does not have many nutrients, it is full of antioxidants that help fight oxidative stress.

Fresh or dry ginger might help people recover from colds, flu, and respiratory viruses. It can help with digestive problems, and one of the most popular uses is to relieve nausea, particularly for women suffering from morning sickness.

GROWING THIS SUPER SPICE

Ginger will thrive all year round in US hardiness zones nine and above. Although it is an annual, it is simple to grow ginger from a rhizome for future plants. A rhizome is a stem that grows underground. It develops nodes (little bumps) where roots and stems develop and grow horizontally. Imagine a piece of ginger. Each section of the main part is a node that will produce a bud; the bud develops into a rhizome, and a new plant will shoot.

Step 1: Do You Need Hot Climates to Grow Ginger?

Although ginger grows best in warm, humid climates, those in zones eight and below can still grow ginger in containers indoors or outdoors. You should make sure the soil is loose so that drainage is better. Choose a site with lots of sunlight, preferably at least 2 to 5 hours of direct sunlight, and is sheltered from the wind.

Soak a piece of store-bought ginger in water overnight. This will remove any treatments that have been used to stunt the growth. Cut pieces of the rhizome into about 1 to 1 ½ inch chunks. Leave them for a couple of days so that the cut can heal. In spring, plant each rhizome 2 to 4 inches in the ground and six inches apart.

Step 2: From Rhizomes to Ginger

If you get a lot of April showers, add compost to help replace any nutrients that leach from the soil. Do not let the soil dry out during the early stages of growth. Once summer passes and the cooler weather comes, it will be enough to just use a mister on the plants. Over the next ten months, watch your ginger plant grow to between 2 and 3 feet tall.

Step 3: Harvesting Young and Mature Ginger

Young ginger roots are harvested from 4 to 6 months after sprouting. There is no hard flesh on the roots, so there is no need to peel the ginger before use. The flavor is also milder. Mature roots are harvested after 10 to 12 months and after the plant has blossomed. The stems will have dried, and the leaves will turn yellow. Aside from the more pungent flavor, the hard skin will prevent bruising when preparing the ginger.

You have various harvesting options. You can harvest a few young roots and leave the rest to mature. Once mature, you can harvest roots that you will use and leave the rest to over-winter. Ginger will keep growing as long as temperatures remain above 55ºF. If you are not going to harvest all the roots, dig around the base of the plant carefully, so the remaining roots are not damaged.

Step 4: Keeping Ginger Good for Months of use

The length of storage will depend on whether you peel the ginger or not. Unpeeled fresh ginger will keep in the fridge for up to 3 weeks. Peeled or unpeeled ginger can be saved in an airtight plastic bag in the freezer for up to 6 months. It is also easier to blend the ginger into a paste and keep it in the fridge. This saves you prep time and increases the likelihood of using it in your meals.

To make ginger powder, slice the ginger and leave it in the sun for 3 to 4 days to completely dry. Alternatively, you can use a dehydrator or the lowest heat setting in the oven. Pop the cooled slices into a grinder and blend until it becomes a fine powder. Keep your ginger powder in an airtight container.

Step 5: Ginger—Sliced, Diced, or Sprinkled

Ginger pairs well with many dishes because of the sweet and spicy flavors. Fresh and ground ginger can be added to curries, soups, stews, chicken, and fish, and it adds a nice warm flavor to carrots and sweet potatoes. For baking, you can make gingerbread, ginger flapjacks, or cakes with a lemon/lime drizzle.

Use ginger slices (fresh or dry) or your powder to make tea. This is often best with a slice of lemon and honey, especially if you have a cold. You can also add slices or powder to elderberry tea and syrup to boost immunity.

Even a few spoons of ginger powder in your bath can help digestion, improve blood circulation,

and reduce inflammation. A ginger bath is also good for steam inhalation if you have a cold.

A ginger extract can make good use of the ginger peels, which many people just throw away. Add 1 cup of peels with two tablespoons of fresh ginger and 2 ½ cups of water. Bring the mixture to a boil and then turn it down to simmer for 10 minutes. Leave it overnight or for a minimum of 6 hours. Add ¾ cup of sugar and reheat until all of the sugar has dissolved. You should leave it on the heat, stirring occasionally until it reduces to a thick consistency. Add ginger extract to water, smoothies, or take a teaspoon full.

A SENSIBLE DOSE OF GINGER

Typically, 2 to 4 cups of ginger tea is a good amount to aim for. Like garlic, consume ginger in normal food quantities to not suffer an upset or overpower your dish. Check with your doctor before using ginger if you have blood clotting disorders, diabetes, or if you have any heart conditions.

You can make your ginger beer with freshly grated ginger, lemon juice, simple syrup, non-chlorinated water, cream of tartar, and a little baker’s yeast. This is an excellent drink for any season and the perfect way to spice up and turn a cocktail into something a little healthier.

Will You Be the Bird to My Chili Plant?

We know we cannot plant seeds with closed fists. To sow, we must open our hands. - Adolfo Perez Esquivel

We talked about the heat of chili peppers in Chapter Six... What we didn't talk about was why they're so hot.

So, here's an extra nugget of information for you: Chilis are hot because they do not want to be eaten by mammals. However, they do want the birds to spread their seeds far and wide, causing more chili plants to germinate further and further from the original plant. That is great news for the chili line... and it is great news for us as chili lovers. The further a chili can spread its seed, the more of the world it reaches.

And that is exactly what I'd like to do with this book.

We rely far too much on the pharmaceutical industry, and it is doing us more harm than good. My mission is to spread the word about how easy it truly is to grow your own natural remedies and improve your health.

So, I'd like to ask you for a favor. Would you be the you help me scatter the bird for my chili plant? Would seed so I can reach even more people?

Don't worry... There's no flying involved.

All I'd like you to do is leave an honest review of your experience with this book.

With each review, a new seed is planted, and more people will be able to access information that can truly help them.

Let's spread the word. Let's help people take control of their own health- and unlock the door to a wonderful life in the process.

I can't thank you enough for helping me with this. We have hot information here...

Let's take a lesson from the chili plant and spread it far and wide.

Scan this QR code to leave a review

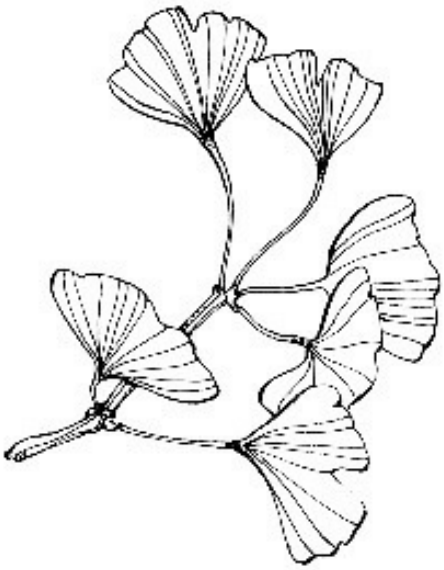
Thank you for your support,

Jenni
hello@homesteadmindset.com

Chapter 11

GINKGO

Ginkgo biloba



Ginkgo biloba is the only surviving member of an ancient order of plants native to China, and it is so old that it is often referred to as a living fossil. In fact, the oldest leaf fossils from this tree are 270 million years old (Arbor Day Foundation, n.d.). Traditional Chinese Medicine tends to use the leaves and seeds; however, modern research is focused on the extract. The Ginkgo tree has unique fan-shaped leaves and can grow to be 100 feet tall, so consider this before choosing a location in your garden. There are dwarf varieties available too, which are just as beautiful and perhaps more practical, depending on your available space.

MULTIPLE WAYS GINKGO CAN HELP YOU

Like many herbs, ginkgo is high in antioxidants and can help fight the damage of free radicals. Extracts have shown a positive effect on inflammation caused by arthritis, irritable bowel disease, cancer, heart disease, and stroke. As an anti-inflammatory, it may also help people living with asthma. Because ginkgo can improve blood flow, it may also improve heart and brain health.

Some of the most consistent results have been in the area of dementia. Ginkgo may increase functional capabilities for people suffering from mild Alzheimer's and cause a reduction in symptoms associated with dementia. Other uses include treatment for headaches, migraines, PMS, and low libido.

A lot of interest is centered on the impact of ginkgo and mental health. More research is needed, but 480mg of ginkgo reduced the symptoms of generalized anxiety compared with those taking a placebo (Woelk, et al., 2006). This could also help with depression, but as depression is complex, more research is still needed.

HOW TO START YOUR GINKGO TREE

This is definitely an herbal remedy for the homesteader with long-term plans. It might take around 20 years for your ginkgo tree to mature, but it can live for over 1,000 years— a gift for many generations.

Step 1: Do You Have Space for a Ginkgo Tree?

Find a spot in your garden that receives at least 4 hours of sunlight per day. Bear in mind that this tree will be a fantastic source of shade with time. If you have a local nursery, you can buy a young plant and transplant it. This will help those who (understandably) do not want to wait so long. To plant from the seed, we must start with the stratification process.

Begin with a zip-lock bag, add a couple of handfuls of peat and five ginkgo seeds. The bag needs 1 to 2 months in a place that is consistently around 68ºF. Check the bag occasionally to make sure the peat is just moist. If the peat looks dry, use a mister so that you do not overwater it. After this, place the bag in the fridge for another two months. Next, take a piece of sandpaper and gently sand the seeds. This will help the seeds to absorb moisture when you leave them in a bowl of water for 24 hours.

In a container, mix potting soil with some sand and over-water the mixture so that it is soaking. Make a mixture of 1 part bleach and nine parts water, drop the seeds into the solution for 10 minutes, then remove and pat dry. Pop the seed just below the surface of your soil and leave it in a sunny spot. If you are planting the seed directly, you can do so in spring.

Step 2: Watching Your Ginkgo Grow

As soon as the seedling gains a little height, add a stake to provide it with the necessary support. You should water your ginkgo tree regularly until the plant reaches 35 to 50 feet. It is also good to add compost once or twice a year. You can prune the plant in late fall or winter when the tree is dormant, but this is only to shape it rather than for its health.

Step 3: Which Parts of Ginkgo can Your Harvest?

When it comes to the leaves, it will depend on what medicinal benefits you want to gain. If you need to increase your flavonoids, you should harvest the leaves after they turn yellow. If you're going to take advantage of the ginkgolides (the neuroprotective benefits), you should reap the leaves before they turn yellow.

To harvest the nuts, twist and pull the fruit from the tree. Be sure to collect any ripe fruit that also falls to the ground. Put all of the fruit in a bucket of water, and with a pair of gloves on, pull the fruit apart to access the nuts. I must warn you; at this point, there is an unpleasant smell, but it is worth it and does not reflect the taste of the nuts.

Step 4: Storing Ginkgo Leaves and Nuts

Because of the short harvest time, it is best to dry the leaves for longer use. They dry well in a warm, shady area with good air circulation. These leaves dry well in the microwave between two pieces of paper towel. Nuts can be washed and stored in sealed containers on the shelf, in the fridge, or in the freezer.

Step 5: What to do With Harvested Ginkgo

Gingko nuts are delicious when cooked, but they should not be eaten raw. You can boil the nuts for 10 minutes. For a bit of a treat, fry the ginkgo nuts in a small amount of oil and sea salt. The nuts will crack open, and you can eat them like peanuts! Use fresh or dried leaves to make tea. Use fresh or dried leaves to make a tincture and soak in Vodka or neat cider vinegar. The mixture can be taken in 5ml doses up to three times a day.

GINKGO IS NOT FOR EVERYONE

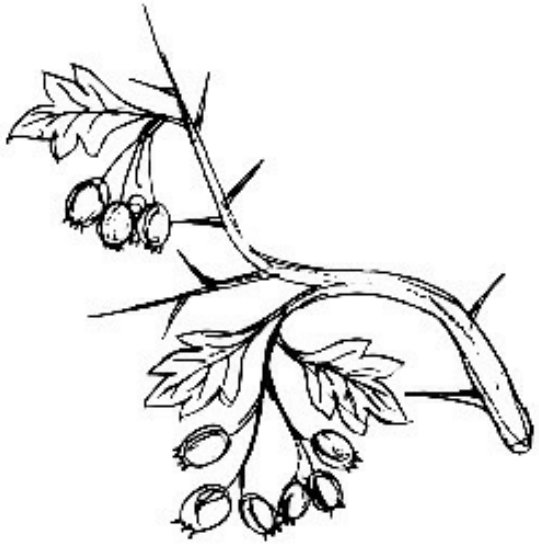
Once you are past that awful smell, it is easy to munch your way through a bowl full of nuts, but you should limit the consumption to around eight nuts a day. This way, you reduce the risk of side effects like nausea, diarrhea, dizziness, headaches, and stomachache. If you have epilepsy, are on blood thinners, antidepressants, or NSAIDs, you should not use ginkgo.

Ginkgo trees are excellent urban trees and are tolerant of city pollution. If you do not have space in your garden, it is a great idea to speak with the local council or city hall and see if you can plant some ginkgo trees in the community. That way, everyone can benefit.

Chapter 12

HAWTHORN

Crataegus monogyna



The use of hawthorn goes back to the first century, and by the 1800s, doctors in America were using the plant for circulatory disorders and respiratory illnesses. This is a thorny bush that grows up to five feet. The berries are known as haws, and they sprout small white, red, or pink flowers in clusters. Leaves, flowers, and berries have been used for medicinal purposes. Today, the leaves and flowers are more commonly used because they have higher levels of flavonoids.

A HEALTHY HEART WITH HAWTHORN

The antioxidants and flavonoids in the hawthorn significantly impact heart health. The flavonoids help to dilate blood vessels. This improves blood flow and can protect blood vessels from damage. Although more research is needed, clinical trials have shown that hawthorn can help treat cardiovascular disease and ischemic heart disease (Tassell, et al., 2010).

These antioxidants may also help with high blood pressure, high cholesterol, anxiety, and inflammation. On top of all that, it could even slow down signs of aging.

HOW TO GROW HAWTHORN IN 5 SIMPLE PHASES

Hawthorn is another plant that takes a little time to mature but gives back for years to come. Hawthorn plants are considered ancient once they hit their 225th birthday, and some will live up to 400 years. Plus, they flower twice a year.

Step 1: To Plant From the Seed or Buy a Young Plant?

Hawthorn seeds will need cold stratification. Separate the seeds from the fruit in a bucket of

water and gently mash, strain the seeds, and pat dry. Add the seeds to a bag of moist sand and leave the bag in the fridge for between 120 to 135 days. You can then plant the seeds, and within 45 days, they should sprout. Make sure the seeds have full sun with soil well-drained and loose soil. Planting the seeds without cold stratification takes around 18 months to germinate, so those extra steps speed up the process.

Step 2: Ensuring Your Patience Pays off

During the first year, water regularly. Once established, it is a reasonably drought-tolerant tree, so it only needs to be watered during dry or hot spells. They are considered light feeders, so you only need to add some compost and some mulch in spring.

Step 3: From Plant to Plate

The flowers and leaves of hawthorn can be harvested in early May. You can take advantage of pruning the bush and use the branches to reap the goodness. Pick the time when the flowers are just beginning to open. The flowers contain trimethylamine (nature's way of attracting pollinators), but you might notice a fishy smell. You can harvest the berries in late summer, but if you can wait till fall, the berries will be sweeter.

Step 4: That Smell Will Disappear

The flower's fishy odor will dissipate as soon as the flowers start to dry out. You can gather your branches into a bundle and hang them to dry. Alternatively, you can dry them in baskets or paper bags. Be careful of the thorns. You might want to use gloves. It will take around 3 to 4 days to dry the flowers and leaves. Berries can be dried in the oven or the dehydrator, and they will be ready within 36 hours. Store the dried berries, flowers, and leaves in airtight containers.

Step 5: Adding Hawthorn to Your Diet

The first thing to be aware of is that hawthorn seeds contain amygdalin, a compound of cyanide and sugar, so you can't eat the seeds. You can eat hawthorn berries like cherries, spitting the seeds out. Even once you have cooked the berries, you should remove the seeds. You can use the berries to make jam, wine, vinegar, and desserts. Young leaves harvested in early spring have a slightly nutty flavor and make an excellent addition to leafy salads. Dried berries, leaves, and flowers can be steeped in hot water to make tea.

For some, heart health is not just about the physiological benefits. It is also about taking care of a tired or emotionally damaged heart. Old wives tales say you can make a hawthorn tincture and then syrup to mend a broken heart. Mix three cups of brandy with 3 cups of dried berries. Leave it for four weeks and shake it as often as you remember, preferably daily. If the brandy levels drop, top the jar up. Strain the berries, and you are left with a tincture.

With the strained berries, add 4 cups of water and simmer for an hour to burn off the alcohol. Strain the liquid again and return to the heat for another hour or so of simmering. If you are left with 2 cups of liquid, add 2 cups of honey, making sure there is always an equal amount. This honey will help preserve the syrup. In a sealed bottle, the syrup will last for around one year, and once opened, it lasts three months in the fridge.

SERIOUS CONSIDERATIONS FOR HAWTHORN

So far, there have not been enough studies to confirm an optimal dose for hawthorn. Avoid hawthorn if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. Hawthorn may also interact with medications like digoxin, beta-blockers, calcium channel blockers, phenylephrine, or nitrates. Men taking medication for sexual dysfunction should be cautious in case hawthorn causes blood pressure to drop too low.

Your heart works incredibly hard and never gets a break. Whether physical or emotional, it will also take quite a few beatings. It is incredible how your overall well-being can improve when you take care of your heart. On the same note, we are talking about your heart here. You cannot self-treat heart conditions, so please, if you have any concerns about your heart health, please see a doctor.

Chapter 13

HOLY BASIL

Ocimum tenuiflorum

Holy basil is both a sacred herb in Hinduism and a favorite in Ayurvedic medicine. It has often been considered a tonic for the whole body because of the nutrients, and it has earned the name "Queen of Herbs." True, it is a holy herb, but it is not basil. Holy basil is a member of the mint family. It is a perennial shrub. You can spot this herb by its small, round leaves with serrated edges. The leaves grow in opposite pairs along a hairy stem.

HEALTH BENEFITS FROM THE HOLY HERB

The entire holy basil plant contains massive health benefits, thanks to the high amounts of vitamin A and C, calcium, zinc, iron, and chlorophyll. Holy basil has antibacterial, antiviral, antifungal, anti-inflammatory, and analgesic properties, so it will help treat wounds and infections. It may also help protect your stomach, ease joint pain, and lower blood pressure.

In Ayurvedic medicine, holy basil is used to treat depression and anxiety. Practitioners recommend daily holy basil tea to relax, and clear thoughts and scientific studies back this. Published in the Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge, 500mg of holy basil extract allowed people to feel less stressed, anxious, depressed, and even more social (Jamshidi and Cohen, 2017).

GROWING, HELPING, HARVESTING, STORING, AND USING HOLY BASIL

If you live in colder climates, holy basil is grown as an annual. In zones ten and above, it will grow well as a perennial. Because it grows quickly from seeds and cuttings, it takes no effort to grow this herb indoors or outdoors.

Step 1: Growing the "Queen of Herbs"

Like many herbs, holy basil prefers full sun and moist soil with good drainage. You can directly plant the seeds in spring once the last frost has passed or start indoors six weeks before you plan to transplant the seedlings. The ideal temperatures for germination are between 65ºF and 70ºF. You only need to cover the seeds with a thin layer of soil so that light can help the germination process. You can also take a cutting and plant that in the same conditions. When transplanting to the garden, space the seedlings at least six inches apart.

Step 2: Helping the "Queen" to Thrive

Holy basil is susceptible to basil downy mildew, so the soil must be kept moist but not soaking. Add a little compost, not fertilizer, to holy basil. If you fertilize, you reduce the essential oil concentration and the flavor. Pinching back holy basil will encourage more growth.

Step 3: Harvesting Holy Basil

Harvest holy basil mid-morning once the dew has dried. You will be able to harvest the herb 3 to 5 times during the growing season, so do not be tempted to cut the stems too far back. Cut the stems just above the bottom 2 or 3 sets of true leaves. If you want to use leaves and flowers for their medicinal purposes, wait until after the flowers appear before harvesting.

Step 4: The Best Storage Methods for Holy Basil

You do not want to wash harvested holy basil because this could encourage rotting during the drying stage. However, you do want to check for any insects and damaged leaves. Shake the leaves to remove insects and pinch off the unhealthy leaves. Bundle the stems together and hang to dry. It is best not to use the oven or a dehydrator because the aroma might be lost. It should take about two weeks for leaves to dry (flowers, too, if you have left them intact). Pull the dried leaves and flowers off the stem and store them in a dark, airtight container. The dried parts will last for up to a year.

Step 5: A Delicious Herb for Teas and More

To make holy basil tea, take 2 or 3 teaspoons of your dried leaves and flowers and steep them in hot water for 5 to 6 minutes. I like taking some fresh leaves and adding them to cold water to give it a little more flavor. You can also add fresh holy basil to stir-fries, meat, fish, chicken dishes, and anything you add garlic to.

Use Holy basil in air fresheners and diffusers—mix three tablespoons of freshly crushed leaves with 1 ½ cups of water. Leave the mixture for at least 4 hours. Add the distilled water to a mister or heat it and inhale the steam. You can also add fresh or dried leaves to your bath to improve your skin and inhale the steam.

WHEN NOT TO USE HOLY BASIL

Holy Basil is not recommended if you are trying to conceive or if you are scheduled to have surgery within two weeks. You should also avoid holy basil if you are taking anticoagulants. As holy basil helps people to relax, take care when using it with any medications that can cause drowsiness.

There are three recommended doses depending on the intended use. For anxiety and depression, take 500mg of the leaf extract twice a day. For nervous disorders, 300mg of leaf extract for 30

days. To improve sleep and memory problems, you can take 400mg of leaf extract in the morning and 800mg in the evening for up to 6 weeks (Christiansen, 2021).

Holy basil is often best when fresh. Because you can harvest the herb various times, it is good to do so when you have time to make the most of fresh leaves in cooking—like trying those Thai-inspired dishes. Then store the rest for year-round use.

Chapter 14

HYSSOP

Hyssopus officinalis

Hyssop is another one of those brilliant examples of how science is trying to catch up with traditional learning. And science is learning so much more in the process! Hyssop is an ancient herb. It was even mentioned in the Old Testament for soothing chest ailments and its cleansing effect. Skip forward a couple of thousand years, and studies are now being conducted on the effectiveness of Hyssop on cancer cells. Even though research is in the early stages, the results are looking positive.

Not only is Hyssop a medicinal herb, but it is also a member of the mint family—an excellent choice for cooking. The herb has long stems with long, thin leaves and small blue or purple flowers, sometimes pink or red.

TRADITIONAL AND MODERN BENEFITS OF HYSSOP

The list of traditional uses is extensive. You can use Hyssop for digestive problems, gas, intestinal pain, colic, and liver problems. The list also includes the treatment of coughs, colds, sore throats, and asthma. Some have used it for gallbladder disease, urinary tract infections, menstrual cramps, and improved circulation. Used topically, it can of helping with burns, bruises, and frostbite.

In recent years, studies have shown how hyssop destroys cancer cells. Hyssop may even be one of the more potent anti-cancer herbs, with a laboratory study in 2017 killing 82 percent of breast cancer cells (Kooti, et al., 2017).

GROWING NEEDS OF HYSSOP

Hyssop makes a pretty addition to herb gardens and borders of a garden. Once planted, you will have visual appeal and health benefits on your doorstep.

Step 1: A Hardy Perennial

Hyssop is not fussy about where it grows. It can be directly in the soil, rock gardens, containers, indoors, or outdoors. Prepare the soil by adding compost and making sure that it is well-drained. You should choose a spot that has full sun to partial shade. Start seeds indoors around 8 to 10 weeks before the last frost. The seeds can take up to 21 days to germinate. When spring arrives, transplant the seedlings, placing at least 12 inches apart.

Step 2: What Does Hyssop Need?

Hyssop is a perennial and does not need any special attention. Light watering may be required in warmer months but be careful not to flood the roots, or the plant may develop root rot. Pruning is optional, but you can prune to encourage more growth or shape the bush if desired. Spring and late winter are the best times for pruning.

Step 3: Harvesting Hyssop

Leaves can be harvested as and when you need them but preferably before the plant flowers. Mid-morning is a good time to reap the flowers because the dew will have had a chance to dry. Check to see that the flowers are around three-quarters open before snipping them with a pair of scissors. You can also trim entire stems with leaves and flowers.

Step 4: Hyssop all Year Round

Fresh hyssop leaves and flowers can be placed between damp paper towels and inside a plastic bag. In the fridge, it will keep for a few days. To dry hyssop, bundle together some of the stems and hang them to dry in a warm place with good airflow. It will only take 2 to 5 days to dry, and you do not want to leave them for much longer because the leaves will start to lose their flavor. Once they are dry, store them in an airtight container.

If you spread leaves on a sheet of baking paper and freeze them, you can transfer the frozen leaves into a plastic bag and keep them in the freezer. The leaves will be good for up to a year.

Step 5: Hyssop Packs a Powerful Punch

As tempted as you may be to throw a big handful of this herb in your dishes, it has a strong flavor, and too much could result in a bitter taste. Start with a small amount of hyssop, so you know the right amount for your tastebuds. Use fresh flowers and leaves in salads, soups, stews, and poultry. When roasting meat, you can add a sprig to the roasting pan. In many ways, you can use it like rosemary. Lightly chopped fresh leaves pair surprisingly well with fruit salads.

Hyssop tea can help relieve cold symptoms and improve digestion. Again, you can use fresh or dried leaves steeped in hot water but start with a small amount and add more if you want a stronger tasting tea. Finely chop the leaves and add them to vodka to make a tincture.

WHEN SHOULDN'T YOU TRY HYSSOP?

No standard safe dosage has been set for the use of hyssop. Typically, you can add 2g of dried flowers and leaves to water for tea and repeat up to three times a day. Try to keep the use of hyssop short term because prolonged use might cause seizures.

People who should not take hyssop include pregnant women, those with a seizure disorder, medication for diabetes, blood sugar levels, and lowering cholesterol. Hyssop may interact with antiviral medications, glucocorticoids, and immunosuppressant drugs. Because the list is quite

extensive, check with your doctor to be on the safe side.

Hyssop is another vibrant herb that makes your garden look amazing. Even though more research is needed, there are enough known benefits to make it worth planting. Bees love hyssop, and it makes for wonderful honey. Save some of those bright flowers for the pollinators.

Chapter 15

LAVENDER

Lavandula spica

Lavender can pretty much introduce itself. Many of us have come across air fresheners, candles, and beauty products with this familiar smell, which alone is often enough to help a person relax. Lavender is native to the Mediterranean, but it is cultivated worldwide. Lavender plants have long stems with small, grayish-green leaves. The flowers tend to grow in the form of a spike or a pinecone. There will be different shades of purple depending on the type of lavender.

IF RELAXATION HAD COLOR AND SCENT

Traditionally, Lavender was used to add a pleasant fragrance to things like clothes and hair. Today, more attention is being placed on the potential medicinal and therapeutic benefits. Most commonly, lavender essential oil is used to help people sleep. A nice foot massage using lavender essential oil has been shown to reduce both stress and depression (Bahrami, et al., 2017).

Lavender is an antioxidant, so it may help heal wounds more quickly and also help clear up other skin conditions like acne and eczema. The good news is that people with sensitive skin can dilute lavender oil for gentler treatment. Lavender oil also contains anti-inflammatory components, so it may reduce general pain and pain caused by conditions like arthritis and rheumatism. Lavender may help protect the heart from stress caused by high blood pressure, relieve asthma symptoms, and take the edge off of menopausal hot flashes.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR GARDEN AND MEDICINE CABINET MORE RELAXING

If you have only grown lavender and cut the flowers to make your home smell nice, you will

learn some new ways to use this beautiful plant. If you want your garden to have that tranquil feel, let us start with the seed.

Step 1: Encouraging Lavender Seeds to Germinate

Lavender can be tricky to grow and will need some early planning. Start your seeds indoors, 3 to 4 months before the typical planting date in your zone. This will increase your chance of germination. Seeds may not be available this early, so consider buying them the previous season.

Use peat pots or toilet roll holders filled with soil to plant the seeds. They can be planted straight into the ground, and there is less chance of damaging delicate roots during transplantation. Fill your pots with soil and then water. Because lavender seeds are so tiny, moisten the soil first so that the seeds will not fall through the soil. Sprinkle a little more soil on top of the seeds. Place the pots on a tray and cover them in a plastic bag. They will need to go in the fridge for 3 to 6 weeks. Take them out of the refrigerator and place the trays in the sun. The seeds should germinate within a few days to a week. If you don't want to start your own plants, don't forget your local plant nursery is likely to have lavender plants for sale.

Step 2: Taking Care of Lavender Plants

This perennial bush will grow to around 1 to 3 feet in height and width, so you need to transplant the plants with this space in mind. Cramping too many in a small area will reduce the airflow and impact long-term growth. Lavender will need regular watering while it is establishing. Once established, it becomes drought-resistant so take care not to overwater it because this is one of the biggest causes of stress for this plant. Deadhead any flowers you are not going to harvest. You can leave a few flower heads on if you want your lavender plant to self-seed.

Step 3: When Is the Right Moment to Harvest Lavender

Lavender flowers in summer. You can cut stems back by a third of their length, which encourages better growth the following year. The best lavender stems and flowers to harvest are the younger ones.

Step 4: Storing Lavender to Savor the Scent

If you want to use fresh lavender, you can put stems in a vase and keep them in the fridge for a solid 8 to 10 days. Dry flower heads in a dehydrator or on the lowest heat in the oven. This may take 24 to 48 hours to dry completely. Do not be tempted to increase the temperature to get the job done faster; it will just reduce the health benefits. To air dry, hang in bundles for at least a week.

Step 5: Lavender for Health and Home

One way to use lavender is to make an extract. Fill a jar with lavender flowers and cover the flowers with alcohol. Leave the jar in a cool place for at least a month and shake as often as you remember. Strain the flower heads and save the extract. You can use a few drops of the extract in cooking savory dishes and desserts—even drinks like tea and lemonade.

To make lavender-infused oil, switch the alcohol to an oil of your choice. I like coconut and almond oil because of the additional benefits for the skin. Leave the flowers and oil in an airtight jar for at least a week, up to two. Strain the flowers, and your infused oil is ready to use. Again, because the oil is concentrated, you only need a few drops in baths or diluted in more oil to make

a massage oil. Dilute a few drops in water to use in misters and body sprays. If you add a few drops of vinegar to the distilled water, you also have a good cleaning spray.

The plant can be used fresh or dried in soaps, potpourri, and your homemade aromatherapy candles. Of course, we cannot forget the use of flowers to make a relaxing tea to consume and inhale the benefits.

EVEN LAVENDER COMES WITH SOME WARNINGS

There is no recommended dosage for lavender-infused oil, but one cup of tea per day is an excellent place to start. For cooking, use it as you would any of your other herbs and spices. You should not use lavender if you take any sedative medications, and boys who have not reached puberty yet should not apply lavender to the skin.

I cannot get enough lavender, and I plant it all through my garden, especially along my garden path. This way, I get to take the most advantage of the lovely smell every time I walk up and down the garden. It’s the perfect location because you can stop, and deadhead blooms as you go.

Chapter 16

MILK THISTLE

Silybum marianum

If there ever was an oxymoron in the plant world, this would be it. The idea of creamy, frothy milk and a few thistles is somewhat contradictory, but the name has little to do with this flowering herb related to the daisy family. Milk thistle is highly invasive, so you must watch out for this. There are sharp spikes on the stem, and its leaves are topped with an amazingly bright purple flower.

THE TRADITIONAL USES OF MILK THISTLE

Some of the first uses of milk thistle go back as far as 2,000 years ago, and despite its widespread use as an herbal plant, its medicinal benefits are not scientifically conclusive just yet. Its traditional uses include treating liver and gallbladder problems. It is believed that milk thistle could help with cirrhosis, chronic hepatitis, and liver damage caused by toxins.

One of the other potential benefits of milk thistle is to help improve cholesterol, which may help people with type 2 diabetes; however, this is in conjunction with conventional treatment. Because of its ability to lower bad cholesterol, milk thistle may also help to protect people from developing heart disease.

WHAT IT TAKES TO GROW THIS PRICKLY ADDITION TO YOUR HOMESTEAD GARDEN

Before you even think about planting milk thistle, check with your state laws about whether it is legal to grow this plant. One plant can have a whopping 6000 seeds, and the seeds are viable for up to 9 years. That is an awful lot of milk thistle!

Step 1: Is Milk Thistle Easy to Cultivate?

Even if your state allows you to grow milk thistle, you might want to consider growing it in containers. It is tempting to let the plant do what nature intended it to do, especially if you are not a confident gardener and are excited about something flourishing in your garden. However, it won't be long before milk thistle becomes a challenge to control.

As you can imagine, the seeds are very simple to cultivate. They are not fussy about soil type and will even grow in poor soil. The only thing to consider is that the plant prefers full sun. Plant the seeds ¼ inch in the soil in early spring, provided the last frost has passed. Typically, seeds will germinate within a couple of weeks.

Step 2: What Milk Thistle Needs for Maximum Growth

You have seen how well weeds seem to grow with little help from you. Milk thistle is the same. Like many drought-tolerant plants, it only needs watering during the growth stage and those months when there is little to no rain. You can also prune the plant to help with its shape and full growth.

Step 3: Taking Care When Harvesting Milk Thistle

It might be stating the obvious from the name, but this herb has some sharp thistles, and it might be best to use gloves when harvesting the stems. The best time to harvest milk thistle is when the flowers start to dry. You will notice white tufts on the flowers—very similar to dandelions. At this point, it is easier to cut the flower heads and then prune back the stems.

Step 4: How to Keep Milk Thistle

Flowers can be used fresh, or you can pop them in a paper bag to dry them. They will take between 5 and 7 days to dry when kept in a warm place. Shake the bag around to remove the seeds from the flower heads. It is the seeds you want to store in an airtight container. The seeds will keep for approximately one year. You can grind the seeds if you want to. If you need to plant more milk thistle, save about one tablespoon to reseed. This might not be necessary if you have planted milk thistle directly in the garden.

Step 5: Ideas for Milk Thistle Use

There are plenty of options for fresh milk thistle. The entire flower and leaves can be steeped in hot water for 20 minutes to make tea. If you remove the spikes, you can also eat the flowers and leaves as you would a vegetable. Try adding some dried seeds to your salads. Use ground milk thistle powder in teas, soup, smoothies, and even as a substitute for coffee.

While the main benefits are in the seeds, all parts of milk thistle are edible. The young stems taste a little bitter raw, so you can peel and boil them. Some people say the stems help to quench thirst. You may want to try peeling the roots and soaking them before adding them to soups and stews. My greatest success was drying the roots and grinding them into powder. The ground roots act like flour and thicken soups and other dishes but without the risk of lumps like flour.

PRECAUTIONS WITH MILK THISTLE

Milk thistle is generally safe for most people, but there could be some interactions with various medications. If you are taking diazepam, warfarin, or medications for diabetes, you should check

with your doctor first. Also, take care with raloxifene (an osteoporosis medication), simeprevir for hep C, and the immunosuppressant sirolimus (Mayo Clinic, 2020).

Even though this has been known as the holy thistle for centuries, scientists are still unsure of the concrete benefits of milk thistle. As it is easy to grow and generally safe for most people, it should still be considered a useful plant for your garden!

Chapter 17

MINT

Mentha

The mint family is extremely vast, and we have already been introduced to some members. This chapter will go over the family in general with a few special mentions of fresh mint, spearmint, and peppermint. Aside from the most common mint members, there are some unusual varieties you can try growing. Some of my favorites are lavender mint, orange mint, and ginger mint. Regardless of the mint variety, all plants in the mint family have square stems, pairs of opposite leaves that get smaller towards the top of the plant, and tiny flowers that grow in clusters at the base of the leaves.

THE MAGIC IN THE MINT

Mint contains impressive health benefits in volatile oils such as menthol and thymol. These oils help us by entering the bloodstream, relaxing the tension and spasms in the internal organs, calming various muscles and tissues, and restoring balance in the body. Mint also has antimicrobial properties that can kill different types of bacteria, fungi, and viruses. Mint is often used to aid respiratory problems, open the airways, soothe coughs, and shift lung congestion. The latest research shows how mint can help with bronchitis, pneumonia, and cold sores.

HOW THE MINT FAMILY GROWS

Interestingly, although the mint family contains many different plants, they are not all planted the same way. We have already seen how lavender can be a little sensitive when it comes to germination. Other mints can be similar to weeds—invasive and able to take care of themselves. For the exact growing specifications, check the packet instructions for the type of mint seeds you have purchased.

Step 1: Growing the Aromatic Herb

Mint will grow in most soil types while it is moist and well-drained. To direct sow, plant in the

ground or in containers in spring or in the fall if you do not have frosty winters. Not many are brave enough to plant mint in the ground because it is so invasive, and it will spread like mad, and before you know it, it will take over your garden. If you are planting more than one mint, leave a distance of 18 to 24 inches between plants. I strongly recommend you plant mint in containers.

Step 2: Simple Care Tips for Mint

The top inch of the soil needs to be kept moist, so occasionally, stick the top of your finger into the soil to make sure it is still moist. You can pinch the leaves to encourage better growth. When flowers appear from June to September, trim the buds back to help the aromatic leaves grow fuller.

Step 3: Harvesting Mint to Keep it Under Control

One trick to have more flavor in your leaves is to harvest them before the plant flowers. You can pinch leaves as and when you need them throughout the year. For a larger harvest, cut back stems to the first or second set of leaves. You can even do this two or three times during the growing season.

Step 4: How Long Does Mint Keep?

If you add a little bit of water to a jar, you can add fresh mint to the jar and put the lid on. It will stay fresh in the fridge for 3 to 5 days. Alternatively, you can put sprigs of mint between paper towels and pop the paper in a plastic bag in the refrigerator, and it will last for around the same time. If you want to air-dry leaves, tie them into bundles and hang them upside down. This will take just a week or two to completely dry. For oven drying, spread the leaves out and cook on a low heat, preferably less than 180ºF, for 2 to 4 hours. This will help the leaves keep their aroma and oils. Microwaving mint leaves takes between 1 to 3 minutes; check them every 30 seconds. Of course, if you have a dehydrator, this can be used as well.

Step 5: Special Uses of Mint

Fresh mint pairs well with salads and steamed foods. I particularly like mint and new potatoes. You can make your own mint sauce with white vinegar, boiling water, sugar, and chopped mint leaves. You will never have to buy mint sauce to go with your roast lamb again.

Mint is a perfect herb for infused water, especially if you grow some unusual mint flavors. The same can be said for mint tea. Steep your leaves in hot water for at least 5 minutes. If you are worried about bad breath, just chew on a few fresh leaves.

For different mint uses, add either dried or fresh leaves to your bath and enjoy inhaling the aromatic steam. Crush mint leaves and add them to olive oil for infused mint oil. This is excellent for cooking and for your hair and skin. Once the leaves have been removed, mint syrup makes excellent use of the stems. Add the stems to a pan with 1 cup of water and 2 cups of sugar. Bring it to a boil, and then let it simmer for a few minutes. The sugar will dissolve, and the syrup will thicken. Add mint syrup to drinks and desserts, especially fruit salads.

WHO SHOULD NOT USE MINT AS AN HERBAL MEDICINE?

Because mint relaxes organs, it is not an herb recommended for people with GERD,

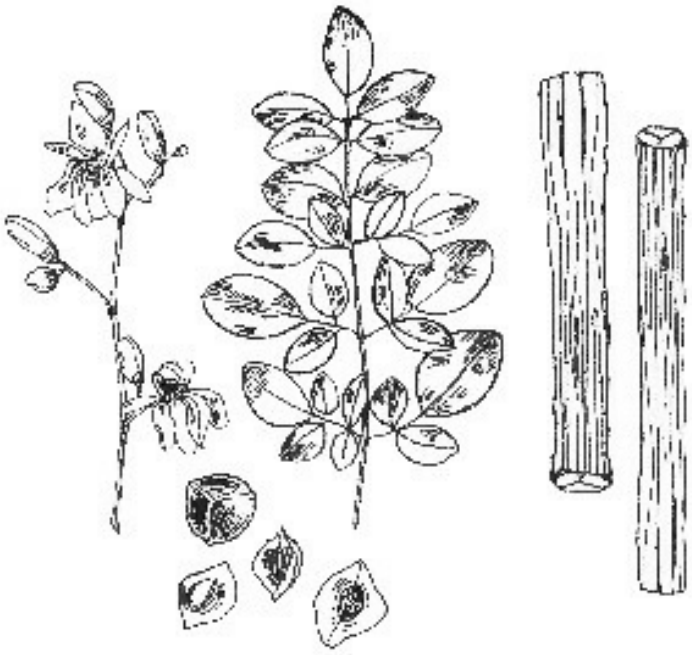
gastroesophageal reflux disease. You should not use mint oil on the faces of babies or young children. The recommended dose of peppermint oil is 0.2 to 0.4 ml, three times a day (Kligler and Chaudhary, 2007). Aside from this, mint should be used the same way as other culinary herbs.

Because mint is such a versatile herb, it is easy to reap its health benefits. Plus, you have the advantage of being able to harvest leaves as you need them or in a large harvest, and it is safe for most people. It is definitely a favorite for the homestead gardener.

Chapter 18

MORINGA

Moringa oleifera



I am always amazed at how few people are familiar with moringa, considering how incredible this plant is. Despite being one of my latest additions to the herb garden, it has fast become one of my favorites. The official name is Moringa Oleifera, also known as the Miracle Tree or the drumstick tree. In Ayurvedic medicine, it is known to cure over 300 diseases, and studies are beginning to back the tradition. I am the first to admit that moringa does not taste as delicious as many other herbs, but when you learn the health benefits, you will want to add it to your diet.

WHY IS IT CALLED THE MIRACLE PLANT?

Moringa contains seven times more vitamin C than oranges, ten times more vitamin A than carrots, and 17 times more calcium than milk. Furthermore, you have nine times more protein than yogurt and three times more iron than spinach, although some studies put this as high as 25 times. Moringa can help boost energy levels, help asthma, lower blood pressure, and reduce anxiety and depression. There have also been some exciting, at least for me, studies on the benefits of moringa for cancer, heart disease, and Alzheimer's. Moringa has anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antiseptic, and antibacterial powers.

Because of this, and the vitamin A, B, protein, potassium, amino acids, and numerous other minerals, moringa is being hailed as the gold herb to combat global malnutrition (Dhakar, et al., 2011). That is another reason to get excited about this herb.

NUTRITION MADNESS IN 5 SIMPLE STEPS

Moringa can be grown as a tree if you have the space. If you do not, it is easy enough to grow moringa in containers and even indoors. In fact, because moringa prefers tropical and subtropical climates, you may have to bring your moringa indoors for winter if you live in a colder hardiness zone.

Step 1: Let's get Growing the Miracle Tree

You can grow moringa from a seed or a cutting—if you know someone with a mature plant. To grow from a cutting, make sure you take a section at least one inch thick and six feet long. Plant it in a hole that is approximately 3 feet wide and 3 feet deep. Add compost to the hole before the cutting, and then gently pat the soil around the base of the cutting. It should be secure but not packed in because you will limit the air in the soil. Keep the cutting well-watered but do not let the water touch the stem. Seeds need to be planted around one foot into the ground and again, add a little compost first. To improve the chances, plant 4 or 5 seeds in each hole. Do not let the topsoil dry out.

Step 2: Giving Moringa all it Needs

During the growing period, it is best to water well but infrequently. Moringa is particularly susceptible to root rot. However, once it is established, the tree becomes drought tolerant. The perfect temperature for moringa is between 77 and 96ºF with plenty of sunlight, all day if possible. The plant and soil will benefit from compost, but it will be more important to prune the plant if you want to manage the size and keep it healthy.

Step 3: What Parts of Moringa can You Harvest?

All parts of the moringa plant are edible. So, you can gently dig around the root ball to harvest some of the roots, but as most of the benefits are in the leaves, it is easier just to leave the roots in peace. The leaves can be harvested at 6 to 12 months, depending on the plant's health. Older leaves are better, and you can just snap these off from the stem. If you want to harvest the seed pods and flowers, wait until the plant is at least two years old.

Step 4: How to Store Moringa

Fresh moringa leaves will be good in the fridge for approximately a week. The seeds inside the pods can be eaten straight away, or the entire pod can be frozen. One of the most popular ways to store moringa for long-term use is to dry the leaves, either in bunches or with the leaves spread out. Keep the leaves away from direct light to protect the vitamins and minerals. When the leaves are completely dry, they will snap. Dried leaves can be ground into a powder. Both leaves and powder should be stored in airtight containers.

Step 5: Moringa Uses

As I mentioned, moringa is a bit of an acquired taste! You can add it to hot water and drink it as a morning detox, but it is not the most delicious way to start your day. It is actually quite nice if you put a little honey and orange juice with it. Leaves and the powder go well with curries and other meat dishes and soups and stews. Add the powder to baked goods, smoothies, and other hot drinks if you want to experiment a little more. It is always best to add moringa last. Less cooking

means more nutrients.

Moringa oil is ideal for skincare and adding extra shine to your hair. You can also use moringa on your skin for its antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory benefits. Create a double boiler with a bowl in a saucepan of water. Add fresh moringa leaves and your favorite oil—coconut or olive oil are good choices. Let the water boil for around 30 minutes until you see the oil turning green. Leave it to cool and strain the leaves.

THERE IS MORE GOOD NEWS!

Moringa has very few side effects and is safe for everyone, including children, pregnant women, and breastfeeding women. It will help to increase milk production. Pregnant women should not eat the bark or roots, so stick to the leaves. If you are on thyroid medication or medications processed by the liver, speak to your doctor first. The FDA has set a recommended dosage of moringa. It is best to start small, with ½ to 1 teaspoon of the powder. Over a few months, you can increase it from 5 g to 15 g per day.

If you cannot wait for the seeds to grow and harvest your own moringa, it is good to buy some dry leaves or powder and start experimenting with its different uses.

Chapter 19

OREGANO

Origanum vulgare

Oregano is the perfect herb for a homestead gardener—especially for beginners. Most people already have dried oregano in their spice rack, so adding this to your garden or kitchen herb collection makes sense. Not only is oregano easy to grow, but it is also easy to add to many dishes, including meat, fish, vegetables, and pasta. However, we want to explore some unique methods to increase the daily dose of this herb.

HOW THE EGYPTIANS USED OREGANO

Typically, we associate the flavors of oregano with Italian cuisine, but way before the Italians came up with the pizza, the Egyptians were using oregano to treat skin burns. Even so, oregano is actually native to Greece. It has been used for sore throats, colds, flu, coughs, and asthma throughout history. Other traditional uses include treating cuts, stomach aches, muscle aches, and pain relief. More surprisingly, oregano has been used to treat dandruff and lice. Oregano is rich in fiber, calcium, iron, and manganese. It can also be a good source of vitamins A, C, and K.

EFFORTLESSLY GROWING OREGANO

It is not really a case of growing oregano because oregano does do most of the work by itself. Nevertheless, you can take steps to ensure healthy growth with the most nutrients.

Step 1: A Low-Maintenance, Hardy Perennial

As a hardy perennial, you can pretty much choose any location for your oregano, and it will even survive a little snow. For this reason, it can be planted as part of borders or among other vegetables to help protect them from pests. If you are growing from seeds, start six weeks before the last frost, and you can do this outdoors. Sow seeds just ¼ inch under the soil so that the light

helps germination. If you want to plant from a cutting, wait until the ground temperatures are above 70ºC. The flavors are more intense when oregano has full sun, so if you are growing it indoors, it will need a sunny window.

Step 2: Let Oregano Take Care of Itself

There is no need to feed an oregano plant. As with all herbs, the growth will be too quick, and the flavors won't develop as well. Oregano is so easy that it does not even need compost. It is best to wait for the soil to dry and then water thoroughly when it comes to watering.

Step 3: Even Harvesting Oregano is Easy

Here are two tips for an excellent harvest. If you are going for a larger harvest, prune the plant before the flowers appear. Stems should be a minimum of four inches long, but it is better if you can wait until they are around 8 inches long. Cut approximately ⅔ of the stem. This will also help new growth. If you only want a few leaves, run your fingers along the stem, and the leaves will fall off into your hand. You will still need to cut the stem back, though.

Step 4: Do not Forget to Cure Oregano

When dried correctly, ground oregano will last for 2 to 3 years, and the leaves will last for 3 to 4 years, so this really is a plant that keeps on giving. Wash the stems, pat them dry, and then remove the leaves. If you want to air dry, bundle stems together and hang them upside down. It will take 6 to 18 hours in a dehydrator, but it takes just 2 hours in the oven at 350ºF. The microwave can be used but check the leaves every 30 seconds, so they do not overcook.

Step 5: How to Make the Most of Oregano

We can start by just adding oregano to our meals. Oregano is a rare herb that maintains most of the flavor when dried, so you can try adding fresh or dried leaves to your pizza. It pairs well with other herbs and spices, such as garlic and basil. As a general rule, if you use olive oil when cooking, oregano will taste great.

You can infuse vinegar with oregano to create an Italian-style vinaigrette for salads. Infused oil also has numerous uses, and again, olive oil is a good choice. This way, you can use the oil for cooking. Topically, it is good for the skin and can be applied to your hair. Just make sure to wash it out properly. The oil can be used for massaging aches and pains. A vodka tincture can be made and taken (a few drops) each day. With vinegar, oil, or tincture, leave the jar out of the sun for at least a month and shake it once in a while.

BE SENSIBLE ABOUT HOW MUCH OREGANO YOU USE

There are fewer health risks with your homegrown oregano than commercially produced essential oils because commercial oils are extremely high in concentration. Oregano is safe for everyone when using the usual culinary amount, and the only thing to watch out for is possible allergic reactions.

If you feel like there is too much oregano for you to use, do not worry. You do not have to harvest it all. Leave the plant in peace, and it will make an excellent cover crop, helping your soil stay healthy and providing food and shelter for the pollinators.

Chapter 20

PARSLEY

Petroselinum crispum

Parsley is underrated, and often a sprig or two is added just as a garnish to make a meal look nice. Parsley is a popular medicinal herb in Ayurvedic and traditional European medicine. Parsley contains apigenin and other flavonoids that may help fight different cancers. So, the next time someone adds parsley to make your meal look good, think of your health and eat it up!

PARSLEY IS MORE THAN JUST A GARNISH

When we hear of inflammation, we often think of swelling, which is correct. However, there is more danger to inflammation than we can actually see, particularly when inflamed blood vessels and arteries that can cause heart disease. Antioxidants like vitamins A, C, and E found in parsley can help reduce inflammation. These antioxidants may also protect us from chronic diseases like cancer, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's. One study on apigenin showed a reduction in the aggressiveness of breast cancer cells (Perrott, et al., 2017).

If you are a fan of grilling meat, you might want to think about adding parsley. When proteins are cooked at high temperatures, heterocyclic amines are created, and these can cause cancer, and Parley may counteract this effect.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THIS ANNUAL HERB

As it is an annual, you will have to replant parsley, but that is okay because we can really maximize one season of growth for year-round benefits.

Step 1: Prepare Your Soil Before Planting Parsley

Parsley likes a certain kind of soil, so it is better to get the growing conditions right before planting the seeds. Soil should have a pH between 5.5 and 6.7 and be nutrient-rich, so add compost beforehand. In warmer climates, look for partial sun, and in colder climates, full sun. If

you live in a hardiness zone of seven and above, you can plant seeds in the fall too. Sow the seeds in spring either directly in the ground or in containers. The seeds should be planted ¼ in the soil and 6 to 8 inches apart.

Step 2.: How to Care for This Annual Herb

The only thing parsley really needs is consistently moist soil, so try not to let the topsoil dry out. Pinching young leaves will help increase the number of stems and, therefore, the number of leaves.

Step 3: Harvesting Parsley

Leaves will be ready to harvest after 70 to 90 days of growth. You can harvest just a few leaves or cut the stems at the bottom of the plant. Try to harvest from the outside of the plant to encourage new leaves. If you are lucky and your parsley survives as a biannual, it will flower in the second spring. You can increase the chances of this by planting in containers and bringing it indoors during the winter. However, you might find that the leaves are too bitter after parsley flowers.

Step 4: Freezing Parsley is the Best Storage Method

Fresh parsley is best and keeps well in the fridge for 2 to 7 days in a perforated plastic bag. You can dry the leaves the same way you dry other herbs, air drying, oven drying, or in a dehydrator. However, the best way is to freeze fresh leaves because it preserves the flavor better. If you freeze the leaves individually and then store them in a plastic bag, you can take just the leaves you want to use. In cooked dishes, the leaves can be added frozen or thawed.

Step 5: Do Not Forget To Use Your Parsley Root

Because a parsley plant will only last for a year or two, it is a good idea to dig up the roots because they have their own health benefits. Parsley roots have more potent diuretic properties than the leaves. In fact, parsley root tea can help improve the urinary system and nourish the blood. Alternatively, you can eat the roots raw in salads, and for a less healthy but delicious option, fry them and eat them like fries.

Making parsley pesto will give you more medicinal benefits than basil pesto. You can also add chopped fresh parsley to butter or infused parsley oil, especially when cooking meat at high temperatures.

IS PARSLEY SAFE FOR EVERYONE?

As a common culinary herb, you should use the same amount as other popular choices. Some herbalists recommend a dosage of 2 to 3g of parsley root or 2 to 4g of leaves (De La Floret, n.d.). Vast amounts might have side effects such as liver and kidney problems and may even cause uterine contractions. Pregnant women should use parsley wisely and steer clear of the roots.

Parsley is easy to grow, so it is not a huge problem that it is an annual. When freezing, there is still the ability to have parsley all year, and annual seeds are often cheaper than perennials. Growing your own parsley is definitely more rewarding than buying it!

Chapter 21

ROSEMARY

Salvia rosmarinus

Rosemary has a very rich history. The use of rosemary goes back to ancient Egyptian times when sprigs were buried with the dead. The Romans and the Greeks used it as an herb of remembrance. It was used for toothache, lost appetite, and to prevent bad dreams in Britain. Today, rosemary is still very popular for the mind. Even though rosemary is a part of the mint family, it has a very distinctive flavor. You might notice hints of wood, citrus, pepper, lavender, and sage, so it pairs well with many foods. Some varieties of rosemary can grow up to an impressive 18 feet.

WHY YOU SHOULD START SPRINKLING ROSEMARY

Nutrition-wise, rosemary contains vitamins A, B-6, C, iron, and calcium. It can help with digestive problems, heartburn, and liver complaints. It has antibacterial properties, so it may prevent infections. It is also an anti-inflammatory and rich in antioxidants to help boost the immune system and blood circulation.

Rosemary has gained interest because of the potential benefits to the brain. Taking a low dose of rosemary powder improved memory speed in adults (Pengelly, et al., 2012), which may also help prevent and slow the progression of dementia. Inhaling rosemary aroma improves cognition (Moss and Oliver, 2012). The aroma of rosemary can help lower stress and anxiety too. Just 250 ml of rosemary water also improved cognitive functioning (Moss, et al., 2018).

FEEDING YOUR BRAIN IN 5 STEPS

It is hard to find someone who does not want a bit of a brain boost. Whether improving your

focus or staying more alert, it is strong motivation to add rosemary to your herb garden.

Step 1: Growing Rosemary From Seeds or Cuttings

From seeds, rosemary takes a while to germinate and grow. You can start the seeds indoors anywhere from 3 to 6 months before the last frost. Rosemary seeds tend to have a low germination rate. Do not be surprised if around only 30 percent of the seeds germinate. So, plant extra to be on the safe side. Lightly cover the seeds with soil and then use a mister to moisten the soil. To improve the chances of germination, cover the seeds with plastic.

Step 2: Caring for Rosemary

Keep the seeds in a warm, sunny area. It is good to leave the seeds in a handy spot, so you remember to keep checking the moisture. If the soil gets dry, remove the cover and use the mister. You can remove the cover completely when the seedlings appear. Have a little patience. When the seedlings are 4 to 6 inches tall, carefully transplant them into the garden. If you have been growing them indoors, harden the seedlings off by letting them spend some time outdoors each day and adjust to the temperature. Plant them in full sun.

It is often easier to grow rosemary from a cutting. Cut a stem 5 to 6 inches long from a mature rosemary plant. Remove the lower leaves and place the cutting in a jar of water. This will encourage roots to grow. Once the roots are present, you can plant the cutting in soil.

Pruning and regular watering will help rosemary grow better.

Step 3: When and how to Harvest Rosemary

Harvesting rosemary before it flowers means the oils are optimal. It is also best to harvest stems in the morning when the dew has dried but before the full heat hits the plant. You can harvest the tops of sprigs for fresh use, which will also encourage growth and help shape the plant. You can cut stems up to eight inches long for a larger harvest.

Step 4: Methods for Storing Rosemary

Rosemary has firm needles, so it is a good option for freezing. You can freeze rosemary in ice cube trays covered with water or even olive oil or use plastic bags. Just be sure to squeeze all the air out before sealing them. Frozen rosemary will last for a few months. Sprigs can be air-dried or dried in an oven, dehydrator, or microwave. Dried rosemary will be good for 6 to 12 months. You can grind the dried stems into a powder for the longest shelf life, about three years.

Step 5: Adding Rosemary to Your Diet and More

Rosemary pairs well with roast potatoes, lamb, chicken, pork, eggs, tomatoes, soups, and stews. You have a lovely citrus salt if you mix fresh chopped rosemary into coarse salt and add a little lemon zest. Infused honey can be added to tea and spread on toast. For a tincture, use one-part fresh rosemary to two parts vodka or one-part dried to 5 parts vodka.

Fill a mason jar with fresh rosemary and fill the jar up with olive oil until all the rosemary is covered. Leave the jar on a sunny windowsill for four weeks and strain the rosemary leaves before use. You can add a few drops of the oil to your shampoo, moisturizer, or in your bath. For the best aromatherapy, you can make a candle. Do not feel that rosemary is the only herb you

make candles with—even combine herbs! To do this, you can melt beeswax in a double boiler and add your infused oil. Cut a piece of the candle wick and hold it in an empty mason jar or candle holder. Carefully pour the wax into the jar. It is best to wait until it has cooled slightly before handling.

POSSIBLE INTERACTIONS WITH ROSEMARY

As with all culinary herbs, the amount we use in cooking is considered safe for most people, and there are rarely side effects. There can be interactions with anticoagulants, antiplatelets, aspirin, and antidiabetic medications in rare cases, so check with a doctor first.

Rosemary gives us nutrition for the body and the mind, makes our homes smell lovely, relaxes us, and even boosts our brains. Anyone with teenagers could sneak a rosemary mister into their rooms to help them study because, with a little homesteading, there will be enough rosemary for the whole family.

Chapter 22

SAGE

Salvia officinalis

The Seven Sages of Greece is a testament to sage's long history with the brain and wisdom. Even the word itself can mean someone with sound judgment. Many recent studies have been carried out using sage capsules, but as self-sufficient homesteaders, it makes much more sense to grow this wise herb at home. The silvery-green leaves have a soft, cotton-like texture, adding a little more diversity to your garden.

Although sage has been associated with the mind for thousands of years, only recently have there been studies to back the benefits. Researchers from the Medicinal Plant Research Centre, UK, have found that sage oil capsules increased people's performance when taking a word recall test (Science Daily, 2003). Now, sage is being tested as a potential treatment for Alzheimer's, especially as it does not have the same side effects as conventional Alzheimer's treatments.

OTHER BENEFITS OF THIS BRAIN HERB

Sage has lots of vitamin K and small amounts of vitamins A, C, and E. Antioxidants in sage can help fight the free radicals that may lead to cancer. Sage can help to lower bad cholesterol and increase the all-important good cholesterol. With antimicrobial properties, sage can help with oral health. Sage might also help with diabetes because the leaf extract helps lower blood sugar levels.

FROM SOWING TO STORAGE

It does not take much to grow sage, and caring for this plant is straightforward. Another bonus is that it does not take long for the leaves to be ready for harvest.

Step 1: Growing Sage in Your Garden

Sage produces lovely purple, blue, white, and pink flowers in spring, so you might want to choose a spot where these colors can be enjoyed. It is a hardy perennial, so it will do well in the ground, borders, and vegetable patches. The location you choose should be in full sun and with well-drained soil. Plant them ¼ inch under the soil two weeks before the last frost if you are planting sage from a seed. This is also the best time to plant sage from a cutting. Whether you plant from a seed or a cutting, keep the plants two feet apart, so there is enough space for healthy growth and air circulation.

Step 2: How to Grow an Abundant Sage Harvest

Though sage does not like soaking wet soil, it also does not like to dry out, so it will need regular watering. Apart from that, the only thing you need to do for plenty of sage is to prune the herb each spring. Cut back the heavier, woody stems and watch out for potential pests. Remove damaged or diseased stems regardless of the time of year.

Step 3: Harvest Sage the Right Way

Since sage is ready to harvest in as little as 75 days, it is best to harvest lightly in the first year. Pinch individual leaves or cut back whole sprigs. You can harvest sage a few times during the growing season until fall. Rather than harvesting leaves, I take a larger harvest of sprigs each time, leaving a few healthy stalks so the plant can flower and self-seed. The herb will go dormant in then come back to life the following spring.

Step 4: Storing the Brain Herb

Pop the sage sprigs into a glass of water and cover them with a plastic bag for fresh use. They will keep their color and flavor for a week. Fresh sage has the best benefits and flavor, but drying and freezing are still great options for long-term use. Freezing is the next best option to retain the most health benefits. Freeze the leaves in your ice cube tray, either in water or melted butter. A little more work is needed to freeze the leaves individually and then store them in a plastic bag in the freezer. It is worth the effort because frozen sage will last for about eight months in the freezer.

You can dry it in a dehydrator or by air drying, and it should be good for 2 to 3 years. You know when the sage is completely dry when the stem snaps easily.

Step 5: From Cooking to Inhaling

Sage is very versatile. You can add fresh and dried leaves to hot water to make tea, and of course, you can also add it to a ton of dishes, meat, and/or vegetables. Sage is often paired with thyme, but you can try using it with different herbs and spices like ginger and paprika. Chop a few sprigs up and add them to coarse salt to make an artisan seasoning, or soak the sprigs in oil to infuse it for cooking. Simply take a mason jar and fill it with fresh sprigs. Cover the sprigs with your favorite cooking oil and leave it for 4 to 6 weeks.

Sage tincture is great for a mouthwash, toner for oily skin, and to add to your shampoo. The process is the same as making infused oil but replaces the oil with high-proof alcohol. If you want to make a syrup, you can add it as a sweetener to drinks and desserts. Take 5 or 6 sprigs of

sage and add them to a saucepan with 2 cups of sugar and 1 cup of water. Bring it to a boil and let it simmer while it reduces to at least half the quantity.

WHO SHOULD NOT USE SAGE AS AN HERBAL REMEDY?

If you have a scheduled surgery, you should stop using sage two weeks before. Sage could interact with some medications, such as diabetes medications and drugs processed by the liver. Spanish sage could interact with estrogen pills. Even though sage is being used to help treat Alzheimer's, it could interact with the medication, so speak with your doctor. You should also avoid sage if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Apart from that, sage is unlikely to have side effects when we use it in sensible culinary amounts. Consider trying recipes with rosemary and sage for a double dose of brain health.

Chapter 23

ST. JOHN'S WORT

Hypericum perforatum

St. John's wort is another herb with traceable history as far back as the ancient Greeks. It is native to Europe but is also found in Asia and Africa. It is named after John the Baptist because typically, it is in full bloom around his birthday, June 24th. The plant is a bushy perennial with long, oblong leaves with black dots and huge clusters of yellow flowers. In some cases, you can get up to 100 flowers on one stem. Active compounds are thought to be hypericin, pseudo hypericin, and flavonoids, but scientists have not fully proven how St. John's wort heals. The antibacterial properties may make it effective at treating eczema, cuts, and burns, but recent attention has been on the benefits of St John's wort and mental health.

ST. JOHN'S WORT FOR MENTAL HEALTH

One of the primary uses of St. John's wort is to help treat mild to moderate depression. Recent studies show that the effect was similar to depression medications called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors or SSRIs (Cui and Zheng, 2016). The herb does not have the same side effects as some conventional treatments for depression. Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) has also been effectively treated with St. John's wort. The treatment was most effective when the traditional light therapy for SAD was combined with ingesting St. John's wort. It may help with other mental health issues such as obsessive-compulsive disorder and social phobia.

Studies have also been conducted on the benefits of St. John's wort and premenstrual syndrome. Physical and emotional symptoms improved for women with mild PMS (Canning, et al., 2010), and this may be a better solution for those who do not want to take SSRIs to relieve symptoms.

SPECIAL TIPS TO CARE FOR ST. JOHN'S WORT

This is a good herb for many people to grow because it likes US hardiness zones 5 to 10. It is also not too fussy when it comes to soil types, even growing well in sandy, loamy, or rocky soil.

Step 1: A Little Patience With Your St. John's Wort

Your climate will determine the time of year you plant St. John's wort. You can plant in early spring if you tend to get rainy springs and hot summers. If not, roots will develop better when planted in winter. The location is also important, so for cooler climates, plant in full sun, but in the higher hardiness zones, plant it in partial sun. Plant the seeds just under the soil's surface and then water and wait. Seeds can take three months to germinate.

Step 2: Three Tips to Look After St. John's Wort

The first two tips are related to pruning. You can prune St. John's wort in spring or late winter, but it does not have to be done every year. The plant can take a hard prune, cutting back almost to the ground. You can also prune to keep the plant in shape and growing in the direction you want. The best time to prune is before the flowers open. The third tip is to remember to deadhead the wilted flowers to encourage new blooms.

Step 3: A Cool Test Before Harvesting

To determine when the plant is ready to harvest, take a flower and roll it between your fingers. If your fingers turn a deep red or purple color, it is a good sign that you can harvest. If you like traditions, harvest before June 24th. The perfect time is mid-morning and before the flower opens. Then again, if the stem has several flowers, some might be open and others not, that is ok. Cut the stem a few inches from the flower to harvest the leaves and flowers together. The plant will keep flowering, so you will be able to harvest it throughout summer. By September, the flowers will have lost the same healing power.

Step 4: How to Store St. John's Wort

You should prepare your harvest to be dried straight away by either taking the flower heads and leaves off the stems or bundling stems together. Air dry St. John's wort away from direct sunlight. It takes around five days to dry, but it can take up to 2 weeks in cooler zones. While you can use a dehydrator, do not use the oven with this herb as it will kill all the health benefits.

Step 5: Typical Uses of St. John's Wort

Fresh St John's wort has more benefits than dried. Take as much advantage as you can with your fresh harvest and dry the rest. I keep dried St. John's wort for teas, and with the fresh flowers and leaves, I make tinctures, infused oils, and a salve. Take two mason jars and fill them up with fresh leaves and flower heads. Top up one jar with an oil of your choice and the other with alcohol that is over 40 percent. Pop the lids on and leave them in a cool place. Give them both a shake a few times during a minimum of 4 weeks for the infusion. The tincture can be taken in drop form each day.

You can turn the oil into a salve for cuts, wounds, and aching joints and muscles. Add the St. John's infused oil and beeswax in a glass jar. Use 1 part beeswax to 8 parts oil. Create a double boiler by adding the jar to a saucepan filled with water. As the water boils, the wax will melt. Pour the mixture into a tin and leave it to cool.

ST. JOHN'S WORT DEFINITELY ISN'T FOR EVERYONE

There is an extensive list of medications that may interact with St. John’s wort. These include Xanax, birth control pills, cyclosporine, digoxin, imatinib, and irinotecan. This herb might decrease the effectiveness of HIV and AIDS medications and many others (WebMD, n.d). So, if you are on any type of medication, double-check with your doctor beforehand.

If you suffer from severe depression, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia, you should avoid St. John’s wort. It may also make Alzheimer’s worse. If you are due to have surgery, you should not take it either. It is not recommended for pregnant women or those breastfeeding because not enough research has been conducted.

Many of our typical culinary herbs are not fussy about harvesting and play well with other medications. St. John’s wort needs care when harvesting to ensure you get the most benefits and even more care when using it.

Chapter 24

THYME

Thymus vulgaris

Let's return to exploring more typical herbs found in backyard herb gardens. Thyme is an excellent choice. Not only does it promote overall health, but it also adds a perennial evergreen that smells amazing. Historically, thyme has been a popular choice for many cultures but for different reasons. The Ancient Egyptians used it as an embalming fluid, and the Greeks added it to bathwater. Hippocrates recommended thyme for respiratory problems. During the Black Death, Europeans would wear thyme posies in the hope of warding away the plague. There is no reason you cannot add this herb to your bath today or even make a posy to wear, but there are some other excellent ways to harness thyme's benefits.

WHY ADD THYME TO YOUR HERB GARDEN?

There are many different types of thyme (another member of the mint family), but they all contain compounds called biocides. These biocides help to destroy nasty organisms like infectious bacteria. Thyme is also used for its antimicrobial properties. It has been known to help with foodborne bacterial infections and yeast infections. One study showed that thyme, when paired with an antibiotic, can reduce the resistance of bacteria (Palaniappan and Holley, 2010).

Thyme is another good option to treat skin problems such as acne and eczema. It may also help lower blood pressure, protect against colon cancer, and kill breast cancer cells.

THYME AFTER THYME

This is a perfect herb for self-sustainability, both in terms of cooking and health. As it is a perennial, you can harvest it year-round.

Step 1: Planting Thyme

Thyme is planted similarly to the other herbs we have discussed. Wait until the last frost has passed and plant the seeds just under the soil. It is worth checking the pH of your soil because thyme likes a 7.0 pH. You may also want to add a little compost to give it a helping hand. Choose an area that is well-drained and in full sun. Space thyme seeds out at 12 to 24 inches, and you should use the same spacing if you have started the seeds off in containers.

Step 2: Basic Requirements of Thyme

The soil should be kept moist, so water thyme when the top inch of soil is dry. During the first year, you do not have to do any pruning. In the second year, prune once the last frost has passed. You can pinch stems about ⅓ back to help maintain health.

Step 3: When and how to Harvest Thyme

Thyme leaves will have the most flavor when the plant is just about to bloom, but leaves can be harvested any time during the year. Just take the amount you need. Either pinch stems or cut them with a pair of scissors.

Step 4: Keeping Thyme

Fresh thyme is best, and it will keep in the fridge for over a week between paper towels in a plastic bag. Sprigs can also be kept in a jar with a little water if you have the space. In the freezer, thyme will last for up to 6 months, but I rarely bother because you can harvest the leaves for fresh use year-round. You can freeze sprigs in a plastic bag or freeze the leaves with water in ice cube trays. To dry thyme, run your fingers down the stem to remove the leaves and spread them out on a tray. They only take a few days to dry.

One important thing about thyme is that you should be quite gentle with it. The leaves bruise easily, and this could impact the essential oils.

Step 5: Inspiration for Using Your Thyme

Thyme is primarily a culinary herb. Fresh and dried thyme pairs well with virtually all meats and vegetables. You can add it to soups, stews, and pasta dishes, and if you are cooking fish, fresh thyme is better.

I have a lovely recipe for thyme and lemon extract. Fill a mason jar with an even mixture of lemon rind and fresh thyme, add two teaspoons of sugar and top the jar up with vodka. After three months of daily shaking, you have a lemon and thyme tincture or an impressive base for your cocktails.

Infuse your favorite oil with thyme for cooking or topical use. Thyme oil can be rubbed into your hair and may even help with alopecia. Thymol is one of the ingredients of Listerine, so think about oral health too. Thyme oil mixed with salt makes a brilliant body scrub.

ARE THERE ANY POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS OF THYME?

Thyme might slow down blood clotting, so it should be avoided if someone needs surgery or has bleeding disorders. This includes those on anticoagulants and antiplatelet drugs. Also, check with your doctor if you have hormone-sensitive conditions. It may interact with Alzheimer's medications and drying medications.

Thyme is a plant that keeps on giving and is incredibly versatile. What's more, thyme essential oil is one of the few herbal medicines the FDA has approved as safe when used in the intended way.

Chapter 25

TURMERIC

Curcuma longa

Turmeric is very similar to ginger in how you grow and store it. This plant has impressive giant green leaves and stunning and uniquely shaped flowers. If you have ever tried a curry dish, you have likely had turmeric. It is popular in Ayurvedic Medicine and Traditional Chinese Medicine, as well as a delicious culinary spice.

MORE THAN JUST A COLORANT

The active compounds in turmeric are called curcuminoids, and the most important is curcumin, which has anti-inflammatory properties. Many people living with arthritis have reported improvement by taking turmeric. It may also address the chronic low-level inflammation that has been linked to heart disease, cancer, and certain degenerative diseases. It is high in antioxidants that can protect the body from free radicals and may kill cancer cells and prevent its spread. Research also shows that curcumin can be as effective as Prozac for treating major depressive order.

What I find fascinating is how turmeric can help the brain. We used to believe that the human

brain did not produce new cells after childhood. Science now tells us that the ability to grow new cells and connections in the brain, known as neuroplasticity, is possible. This is because of a protein called brain-derived neurotrophic factor—BDNF. High levels of BDNF help with our memory and learning, whereas low levels of BDNF are linked to depression and Alzheimer's. Science has now shown that curcumin can increase the levels of BDNF in the brain (Hurley, et al., 2013)!

FROM RHIZOME TO PLATE

The easiest way to grow turmeric is from a store-bought rhizome. Although it can be grown in any hardiness zone, some care is needed when deciding on your location.

Step 1: Start With a Rhizome

Take a rhizome and cut off a piece with 2 or 3 stubs. You should leave it for a week before planting so the cut has time to heal. It is almost easier to grow turmeric in a container as you can move it around the garden or patio to give it as much sun as possible. If you get frost in winter, moving the container indoors is a good idea. Fill the container with 80 percent fresh potting soil and 20 percent compost. The mixture needs to be loose and lump-free. Plant the rhizome between 2 and 4 inches into the soil.

Step 2: How Much Water Does Turmeric Need?

During spring, rainwater might be all the plant needs to start growing. In the summer months, increase the water to make the soil mildly damp but not soggy. You can cut back on the watering in winter. Do not panic if it takes a couple of months for the plant to sprout! There is no need to prune turmeric because we will harvest the whole plant.

Step 3: Why You do not Want to Pull Turmeric up

Normally, turmeric is ready to harvest around ten months after you plant it. A more accurate way to check is by noticing when the leaves turn yellow and start to dry out. Do not pull turmeric out from the roots because you may damage the rhizomes. This is another reason a container is better: you can tip the whole container out and harvest the roots.

Step 4: The Many Ways of Storing Turmeric

The first thing to do is save some of the rhizomes so that you can replant them next season. They will be fine left in a cool, dry place, and turmeric will be good fresh for a few weeks after harvest. You can also freeze some rhizomes in plastic bags, and the rest can be dried and used as slices or ground into a powder. Wash and slice the turmeric and dry the slices in a dehydrator or the oven on the lowest setting. You will know when the slices are completely dry because they will snap rather than bend.

You can use a coffee grinder or food processor to make a powder with dried slices. You might need to put the powder through a fine-mesh strainer if there are any small, hard lumps. This powder will keep for 3 to 4 years!

Step 5: Do not Worry—Turmeric is not Spicy

Though associated with curries, turmeric has a mild, warm flavor. Some tips to increase your

turmeric intake include grating fresh or frozen turmeric into beans, lentils, rice, vegetables, and eggs. You can do the same with your turmeric powder. The powder can also be added to hot drinks and smoothies. Liquids are the best way to absorb this medicinal herb because your body can quickly digest it. This is true of all herbs but more so with turmeric because it isn't easily absorbed. You can use slices of turmeric or powder to make tea as well. Golden milk is popular among South Asians and can be made by warming milk and adding turmeric powder. It may sound odd if you are not familiar with it, but it is surprisingly comforting and delicious.

Turmeric tincture is made with 1-part rhizome to 5 parts alcohol. Use it as a toner on your face to add brightness and a fresh glow. If you want to make an infused oil, you can use fresh rhizomes or add some powder to a reusable tea bag and add this to a jar of oil. Place the jar in a saucepan with water and let it simmer for 2 to 3 hours. You can use this oil for cooking to add some interesting new flavors.

WHEN NOT TO USE TURMERIC

If you have gallbladder problems, bleeding problems, or liver disease, you should use turmeric with caution. The same goes for people who have hormone-sensitive conditions. Turmeric may interact with medications for cancer, warfarin, anticoagulants, and medications for diabetes, so check with your doctor first. Some people suggest a dosage of 1.5 g per day.

To help the body absorb the greatest amount of health benefits, add black pepper to your turmeric. Pepper contains piperine, and 1/10th of pepper to turmeric can increase the absorption of these fantastic benefits by up to 2000 percent (Gupta, et al., 2013). Black pepper and turmeric really are the magic combination!

Chapter 26

VALERIAN

Valeriana officinalis

The final herb on our list is valerian. Native to Europe and Asia, this plant gained its popularity with the ancient Greeks and Romans. It also grows well in North America, which is why it is a great choice for the homestead gardener. This pretty plant has hollow stems with clusters of white, light purple, or pink flowers that bloom in June. All parts of valerian have health benefits, but most people grow the plant for its roots.

THE CONTRADICTING SMELLS OF VALERIAN

The compound chemicals found in valerian are pretty complex and vary depending on where the plant is grown. Nevertheless, the health benefits generally come from three main chemicals, valerenic acid, iridoids, and isovaleric acid (Ristic, 2021). For around 2000 years, valerian root has been used to help relaxation, anxiety, and sleep. But this also extends to those who struggle to sleep because of other conditions like arthritis, menopause, cancer, HIV/AIDS, and post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD).

Other health problems that may improve with valerian include ADHD, fibromyalgia, OCD, and restless leg syndrome. Valerian may help improve heart health by strengthening blood vessels. It could also help with high cholesterol, reduce the frequency of seizures, aid digestive problems, and improve memory. It is hard to imagine all of these benefits coming from roots that smell so bad.

It is worth mentioning that despite its long history, the studies are still somewhat conflicting. However, it is definitely an herb you want to grow in your garden.

5 STEPS TO ENJOYING VALERIAN BENEFITS

The irony is that the roots smell horrendous but are the most popular for herbal medicine.

Fortunately, the leaves and flowers do not have the same smell and can also improve your health.

Step 1: Growing Valerian From Seeds

If you have practiced with a few of the easier herbs, you should be able to grow valerian from the seed, but it is a little tricky. Beginners may want to buy a young plant from the local nursery and transplant it at the right time. Seeds can be started indoors 2 to 4 weeks before the last frost or, if you feel confident, directly in the garden. Either way, lightly cover the seeds with soil so that they get plenty of light and the chance of germination increases. Aim for full sun or partial shade during the afternoon.

Step 2: Easy Maintenance for Valerian

Valerian is another plant that likes any type of soil that is well-drained. The seeds, seedlings, and plants only need light watering. The plant should grow well without compost, but it prefers nitrogen-rich soil if you feel it needs a helping hand. Remember this when you are adding from your compost pile. Once established, it will weather colder climates. Valerian self-seeds, so even though the germination rate is not as high as other herbs, cut the flower heads when they start to dry if you do not want it to spread.

Step 3: Harvesting Valerian

If you plant in spring, valerian will be ready to harvest in the fall. The “how” will very much depend on how many plants you have and whether you will plant more. Let’s take the example of one valerian plant to start. As valerian can grow very tall, it is best to start by cutting the stems back to just above ground level. Cut all of the stems back. If you do not want to harvest the roots, the plant will grow back in spring.

For the first harvest, you should carefully dig around the base and remove some of the roots. Fill the hole with compost and allow them another year to develop. The following year, you can dig up the entire root ball.

Step 4: What Parts of Valerian Can Be Stored

All parts of valerian can be dried and stored. For the roots, gently wash, but do not scrub them because they are very delicate. Take the leaves and flower heads off the stem to prepare for drying, and discard the stems. All parts can be dried in a dehydrator—taking at least 3 hours. This can be a little smelly, so don’t be surprised if you don’t like the odor! You can also put flower heads in a paper bag to dry them, leaving them a week or two. Leaves will take the same amount of time. Store the leaves, flowers, and roots separately in airtight containers.

Step 5: Healthy Uses of Valerian

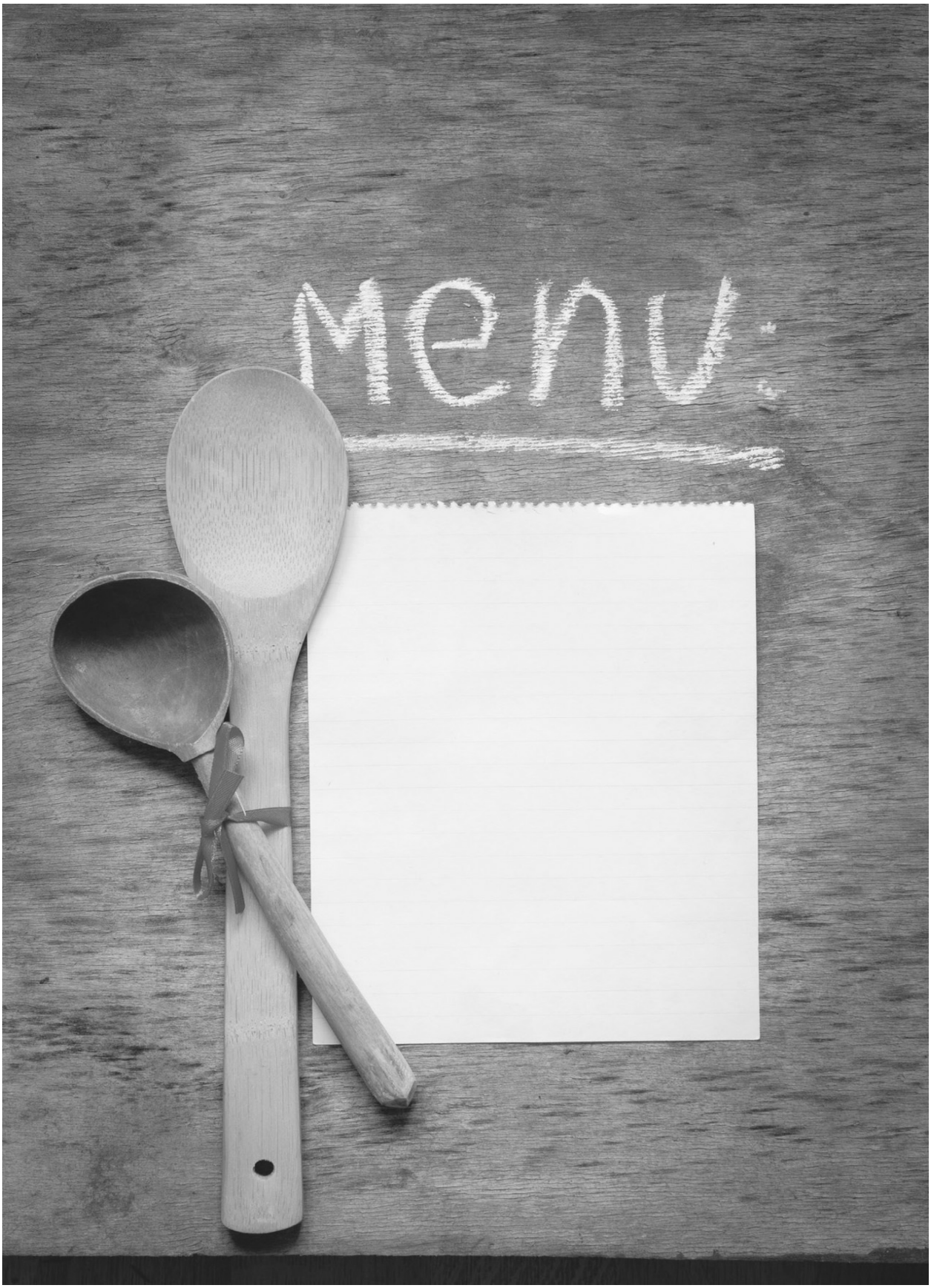
Add the leaves and flowers to hot water to make tea. This has a mild sedative effect, so some people like to put them in their baths and foot soaks for that lovely relaxing feeling.

To use the roots, simmer them in water to make a decoction, similar to a tea. Break the roots up slightly and lightly boil for around 10 minutes. To make a tincture, use fresh roots when available. Put them in a jar and cover them with alcohol for several weeks. The tincture can be turned into a compress and used for muscle cramps. Fresh roots are also suitable for infusing oil. After 4 to 6 weeks of infusing, the oil can be added to beeswax and cooled into a salve.

TAKING CARE WITH VALERIAN DOSAGE

The best time of the day to take valerian is at night because it can help you sleep. With that in mind, be aware of any other medications you take that may cause drowsiness. Research has found that 600 mg does not typically cause drowsiness, but 900 mg does (National Institutes of Health, 2013). Children under three should not take valerian, and pregnant women and those breastfeeding should check with their doctor. Valerian may interact with benzodiazepines, barbiturates, central nerve system depressants, and dietary supplements like St. John's wort, kava, and melatonin.

Aside from this, valerian can be addictive and should only be used for short periods of time. It is an excellent solution for times when stress levels are unusually high. This extra help getting a good night's sleep is worth the few hours of the potent scent during the drying process.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Chapter 27

PUTTING THOSE HOMESTEAD HERBS TO GOOD USE WITH 16 SIMPLE RECIPES

At this point, we have learned all we need to grow herbs, harvest them, and make sure the plant is either used fresh, frozen or dried for a minimum of 12 months' use. The exciting thing is to start experimenting in the kitchen and put all of these herbs to good use. Each herb chapter warns how much herb or spice is too much. I hope you now have the confidence to start adding herbs to different meals. As long as you are using the usual culinary amounts, the worst that could happen is that a meal does not taste great, and the recipe needs tweaking for next time.

Here are sixteen recipes that can help heal the inside and out while enjoying some delicious treats along the way.

MORINGA CURRY

- 2 chicken breasts
- 1 onion
- 3 cloves of garlic
- 1 can of coconut milk
- 1/ cup chicken stock
- 1 tbsp. tomato paste
- 1 tbsp. freshly grated turmeric (or 1 tsp powder)
- 1 tbsp. freshly grated ginger (or 1 tsp powder)
- 1 tsp. chili powder (or two freshly chopped chilies)
- 1 heaped tsp. moringa powder
- 1 tsp. chopped fresh coriander
- ½ tsp. pepper
- ½ tsp. salt
- 4 dried curry leaves (if you have)
- ½ lime freshly squeezed (lemon if you do not have it)

Start by preparing everything in advance. Cut the chicken into cubes and dice the onion. Chop the chilies, garlic, and coriander. Add a generous splash of oil to a deep frying pan—make sure it covers the base of the pan. Add the onion, garlic, fresh ginger, turmeric, and lime juice. Cook for a couple of minutes, making sure it does not burn. Add the chicken cubes and stir; then, add the chili powder, salt, pepper, and coriander. If you are using powdered ginger and turmeric, add these powders now too. Stir so that the chicken cooks on all sides.

Add the chicken stock and curry leaves; turn the heat down to simmer. After 10 minutes, add the tomato paste and coconut milk. Stir and leave it to simmer for another 10 minutes. If you need to reduce the sauce more, turn the heat up a tad. Just before you serve, add the moringa powder.

THE ULTIMATE TOMATO SAUCE

• 1 can of chopped tomatoes
• ½ can tomato puree
• ٦ slices of bacon
• ١ onion
• ٢ cloves of garlic
• ½ tsp. chopped basil
• ½ tsp. chopped parsley
• ½ tsp. chopped sage
• ½ tsp. chopped oregano
• soy sauce
• pepper

This is a favorite in my home when we are in a rush, need leftovers, or are planning to make pizza the next day. Start with a splash of oil in a saucepan and gently fry the chopped onion and garlic. Slice the bacon and add it to the onion and garlic. Add the chopped tomatoes and puree, followed by all your herbs, soy sauce, and pepper. Leave it to simmer for 20 minutes, but this is one of those dishes that tastes better the longer it is left. You can add a bit of water if it gets too thick.

I use fresh herbs instead of dried ones whenever possible. When you use fresh herbs, you can double the quantity. Any leftovers make a great base for a pizza.

CITRUS AND GINGER WHISKEY
• 1 slice of orange
• 1 slice of lemon
• 2 slices of dried ginger
• ½ cup hot water
• ٢ fingers of whiskey
• a little honey

This is a perfect hot drink in winter to help beat a cold or boost your immune system. If you want to add more health benefits, steep echinacea flowers or leaves in the hot water before mixing. Just add all the ingredients, stir well, and sip away. I say two fingers of whiskey, so put two fingers around the base of a glass and fill the glass to the height of your fingers. You can also wait for it to cool and serve over ice cubes for a summer drink.

ASHWAGANDHA CHOCOLATE FUDGE
• 2 cups of chocolate chips (or a bar of dark chocolate chopped)
• 14oz can of sweetened condensed milk
• 1 tbsp. Ashwagandha powder
• ½ tsp. Vanilla extract

Put the chocolate and condensed milk in a microwavable bowl. Cook for 30 seconds and stir, repeat until the chocolate has completely melted. Add the ashwagandha powder and vanilla, stir well, and transfer to a square/rectangle pan lined with greaseproof paper. Chill in the fridge for about 3 hours before cutting the fudge into squares.

THAI HOLY BASIL PORK
• 500g minced pork
• 6 tbsp. chopped holy basil
• 4 red chilies
• 4 cloves of garlic
• 3 shallots
• 2 tbsp. oyster sauce
• 2 tbsp. soy sauce
• 1 tbsp. butter
• 1 tbsp. balsamic vinegar

Melt the butter in a large frying pan, add the chopped shallots and balsamic vinegar. The idea is to caramelize the shallots, so stir occasionally until they are soft and brown. Still on medium heat, add the garlic and chilies, cooking for a few minutes. Add the pork, chopped holy basil, oyster sauce, and soy sauce. Cook until the pork is fully cooked.

CHIMICHURRI SAUCE
• 1 cup of fresh parsley leaves
• ⅓ cup olive oil
• 4 cloves of garlic
• 2 tbsp. fresh oregano leaves
• 2 tbsp. white wine vinegar or apple cider
• ½ tsp. chili powder
• generous pinch of salt and pepper

Finely chop the parsley, garlic, and oregano or pulse these ingredients in a food processor. Scrape the contents into a bowl, add the remaining ingredients, and stir. Chimichurri sauce should be served at room temperature but will keep in the fridge for a week or two. This sauce makes a perfect marinade for meats you are going to grill at high temperatures, and I particularly enjoy it with my barbequed steaks!

MOJITOS
• 2 fingers of white rum
• 8 fresh mint leaves
• 4 fresh basil leaves
• 1 lime wedge
• 1 tsp. honey
• club soda
• ice cubes or crushed ice

Add white rum to a glass followed by the ice, honey, mint, and basil. Squeeze the lime and then add the wedge to the glass. Stir, add the club soda, and stir again.

TURMERIC SHOTS
• 1 carrot
• 1 orange

• ½ tsp. turmeric powder
• ¼ tsp. ginger
• black pepper

This very simple juice shot gives you a quick boost of vitamins and minerals, and it only takes a few minutes to make. Juice the carrot and orange, add turmeric and ginger powder and drink. You can make extra and keep it in the fridge for the next day.

ELDERBERRY CHEESECAKE

For the base:

• ⅔ of a packet of graham crackers
• 6 large tbsp. butter
• 4 tbsp. brown sugar

For the cheesecake:
• 1 packet of cream cheese
• 1 cup elderberries
• 1 cup of heavy cream
• ½ cup sugar
• 2 sheets of gelatin

Start by breaking up the crackers into fine crumbs, either in a blender or in a ziplock bag, smashed with a rolling pin. Pour the crumbs into a bowl and mix in the sugar. Melt the butter and mix it into the crumbs. Put the crumbs into a round cake tin, gently patting them down so that they are firm and level. Leave it in the fridge.

Boil the elderberries for at least 10 minutes on high heat. When almost all the water has boiled off, add the 2 sheets of gelatin and allow it to melt; then, use a metal spoon to stir. Finally, add the sugar and mix again. Leave the berries to cool a little.

Whisk the cream until it forms firm peaks. Add the cream cheese and whip, preferably on a lower setting. Add the berries, mix again, pour the mixture onto the cracker base, and leave it in the fridge for an hour— until the top is firm.

SPICY FRUIT SMOOTHIE
• 1 cup water
• 1 banana
• ½ cup of strawberries
• ⅟ tbsp. honey
• ½ tsp. ginkgo leaves or ⅟ tbsp. boiled seeds
• ½ tsp chili powder

All you need to do is put all the ingredients into a blender and blend it until the mixture is smooth. If you want to add a little more nutritional value, you can add mint or rosemary leaves.

OVEN-BAKED HERBY FISH
• your favorite white fish filets
• 2 tbsp. freshly squeezed lemon juice

• 2 tsp. olive oil
• 2 tsp. dried parsley
• 2 tsp. dried basil
• 1/2 tsp. garlic powder (or 2 fresh cloves crushed)
• salt and pepper to taste

Preheat the oven to 350ºF. While the oven is heating, mix the lemon juice, oil, and herbs in a bowl. Grease a baking dish or line it with greaseproof paper. Place the fish filet in the bowl, turn it over to cover all sides with the mixture, and then place it in the dish. Repeat with the other filets. Pour any leftover mixture over the fish. Cook for 15 minutes. Check that it is fully cooked or add more time as needed. The meat should be white all the way through.

ROASTED VEGETABLES
• vegetables of your choice (potatoes, peppers, mushrooms, zucchini)
• 3 tbsp olive oil
• 1 red onion
• 1 tsp oregano
• 1 tsp thyme
• 1 tsp rosemary
• 2 cloves of garlic
• salt and pepper to taste
• a handful of grated cheese

Preheat the oven to 450ºF. Prepare the vegetables, wash and peel when necessary, and cut. Cut the onion into wedges rather than finely chopped. Add the olive oil, crushed or minced garlic, and the herbs to a bowl and mix well. Add the vegetables to the bowl and make sure they are turned until completely covered in the oil and herbs. Pout them into an oven dish.

Cook the vegetables in the oven for 30 minutes, stirring them halfway through to help with even cooking. When they are ready, sprinkle the cheese on top and put the dish back in the oven until the cheese melts.

ROSEMARY AND CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES
• 150g sugar
• 150g butter/margarine
• 75 g self-raising four
• 75g of quality cocoa powder
• 3 large eggs
• 1 tsp. dried rosemary

Preheat the oven to 350ºF. Many people will go to great lengths to get fluffy cupcakes, like separating egg whites and yolks to beat them. Personally, I add all the ingredients to a bowl and use an electric hand whisk or plenty of elbow grease with a spoon. Spoon the mixture into paper cupcake cases. If you do not have any, grease the cupcake tray with butter and then dust it with flour, this will stop the cakes from sticking.

Cook the cupcakes for 20 minutes. Try not to open the oven while they are cooking. If you stick

a knife in a cupcake and it comes out clean, you know the cakes are ready.

SLOPPY JOES WITH GARLIC BREAD

For the bread:

- hamburger buns
- 2 tbsp. Butter
- 1 clove of garlic
- 1 sprig of fresh parsley or a sprinkle of dried parsley

For the sauce:

- 500 g ground beef
- 1 small onion
- 3 cloves of garlic
- ⅔ cup ketchup
- ⅓ cup water
- 1 tsp. oregano
- 1 tsp. thyme
- 1 tsp. rosemary
- ½ tsp. chili powder

Start by making our herbed butter. Let the butter reach room temperature and add the finely chopped garlic and parsley. Mix well and pop it back in the fridge. Chop the onion and garlic so they are ready to add to the ground beef. In a large frying pan, cook the onions until they are soft. Add the garlic and ground beef, occasionally stirring to make sure it browns evenly. Add all the other ingredients and turn the heat down to let it gently simmer for around 20 minutes. If it is too runny, leave it on the heat a little longer.

With the hamburger buns, spread your garlic and parsley butter on the top and bottom. Toast then under the grill for a couple of minutes, then spoon your sloppy joe sauce onto the buns. Add some cheese before the top if you want.

SWEET CHILI SAUCE

- 1 cup water
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup rice vinegar
- 2 tsp. fresh ginger
- 2 tsp. fresh chili pepper or 1 tsp chili powder
- 2 tsp. tomato paste
- 2 tsp. cornstarch

Bring the water and vinegar to a boil in a saucepan. Add the sugar and stir for a minute. Add the rest of the ingredients except the cornstarch. Turn the heat down and simmer for around 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the cornstarch and keep stirring while the sauce thickens. Leave it to cool before adding it to a bowl or jar and keeping it in the fridge.

CRUNCHY HERBY ROAST BEEF

- a piece of beef on the bone large enough for you/your family

• 3 cloves of garlic
• 2 tbsp. cracked black peppercorns
• 1 tbsp. coarse salt
• 4 sprigs of rosemary
• 4 sprigs of parsley
• 4 tbsp. of olive oil

Crush the garlic and add it to a bowl with all the other ingredients; mix them well. Take the mixture and spread it all over the beef. Preheat the oven to 400ºF. Let the beef sit and come to room temperature. Cook the beef for 20 minutes and then reduce the temperature to 325ºF for the remaining cooking time. Calculate 20 to 25 minutes per 500g for medium-rare. Let the meat rest for 10 to 15 minutes before serving.

As you can probably tell, I am not one for measuring ingredients. So please, you do not have to follow the recipes exactly. The wonderful thing about cooking—especially with herbs and spices—is that you have creative freedom. You can even change some of the main ingredients. For example, you can use lamb or vegetables instead of chicken in the moringa curry. I wanted to emphasize in this chapter that you do not have to feel limited to using one herb per meal. Aim for at least two—and have fun!

CONCLUSION

Sometimes, the small changes we make to our lifestyle, habits, and food choices make a significant difference. Reading up on Alzheimer's, I was shocked at both the prevalence and the cost associated with the disease. In 2016, Alzheimer's cost over $226 billion worldwide, with approximately 35 million people struggling with the disease. It is estimated that one in nine people over 65 years old have Alzheimer's and one in three over the age of 85 (Chen and Du., 2018). The chances are relatively high that someone in our families will suffer from this horrible disease.

That is just Alzheimer's. Imagine when we add up the statistics of heart disease and cancer! By making small lifestyle changes, we can greatly reduce the chances of chronic diseases. As healthcare systems worldwide are put under more and more pressure, there is a simple solution that we can all help with, right from our homes.

The first of the greatest myths we have busted is that you do not need a lot of space to grow your own herbs and improve your health and your family's health. Herbs can be grown together in container pots, on windowsills, or they can be added as part of your vegetable patch or rock garden if you have the space. The second myth we busted is that you do not need magical skills to grow herbs. It is about understanding your garden, soil type, hardiness zones, and sun exposure to choose seeds that will thrive.

Many herbs require similar growing needs, including well-drained soil with full sun and seeds planted about ¼ inch under the soil. If you are not a confident gardener just yet, stick to containers for the first year. It gives you more flexibility when it comes to sunlight and protecting plants from the cold. Once you have mastered germination and caring for plants, you can try directly sowing seeds and adding more to your herb collection. It also gives you time to build up your compost to prepare the soil.

It is what you do with your crops that is really going to allow you to be self-sufficient. One herb that you harvest from and use fresh is a great start. Two or three herbs that you harvest from, freeze, and dry, now provide you with health benefits for at least a year. If you are just starting out, my advice is to choose three herbs, one for the respiratory system, one for the heart, and one for the brain. Because herbs have so many benefits, you will find that they will help you in more than just the intended way.

We have covered various ways to use homegrown herbs for more than just cooking throughout these chapters. My favorites are tinctures and infused oils. You may have noticed that I have not discussed how to make essential oils. This is because essential oils have extremely high concentrations of plant extracts. They cannot be consumed, and they must be diluted to be used topically. It is easier to overdose on essential oils than it is to overdose on tinctures or infused oil, so for me, I feel it is safer. Plus, the distilling process to extract essential oils can be more time-consuming.

On a similar note, one last reminder about checking with your doctor before starting to use herbal medicines, especially if you have a health condition or you are on any medications. Herbs

are natural, but that does not mean there are no possible interactions. There is no guarantee that herbal medicine will work, and conventional medicines should still be taken for some conditions. However, with the right medical advice, herbal remedies can improve the effect of medication and help reduce symptoms.

I hope you have found the health and growing tips of these herbs helpful, and you are motivated to start growing your own herbs and expanding your medicine cabinet the natural, cost-effective way. I would love to hear your progress and if you have tried or tweaked any of the recipes.

If you could leave a quick review on Amazon, I would be extremely grateful to hear your thoughts, and this will also help other people who are concerned about their health and want to grow their own herbs.

And a final reminder, if you would like to see all the herbs in full color, don't forget to scan this QR code (or go directly to the website) and download the pictures for free. It's called "The Homesteader Herbal Handbook Companion List of Herbs."

companion.homesteadmindset.com

Good luck!
Jenni

PS: I am a real person, so feel free to drop me a note at hello@homesteadmindset.com or join my Facebook group at www.facebook.com/groups/homesteadmindset. I would love to hear from you!

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